

Dear St. George Parishioners,

Today you are receiving this special communication from me with added resources to help you move forward in time with confidence and hope in God for the strength and courage to face these harsh and difficult times in our society, world, diocese and parish church. As people of resilient faith, nourished and sustained by the Sacraments and the Scriptures, we will move forward through these present and uncertain times to a better time and place. The Paschal Mystery is actually unfolding before us in real time during these current weeks of Lent, when through our sufferings and passions with life threatening realities, we are being deeply purified for a new Resurrection to life and liberty from sickness and sin along with our Risen Lord. The fullness of life and of liberty from our every adversity is at the core of the Christian Faith that we daily profess.

This year's Lent is making a rather significant impression on the life of the church and her members. An unseen virus with powers to attack and sicken human beings in their bodies can be compared to unseen sins and transgressions which attack and sicken the souls of human beings. The power of a virus is not to be underestimated; so measures to protect and safeguard each member of society are put into place by leaders of government and the church.

We have already heard from the Governor of MN several times about steps and procedures to safeguard the lives and health of the people. Communication from the Archbishop and the chancery has also been consistent with the latest pastoral letter of the Archbishop found as an attachment to this email. While science and medicine are pursued diligently and promise their hope for cures and a return to good health, first and foremost, our hope and trust in God, the author of life, who is the divine Physician, is the first order of our focus and attention.

Yes, we all have to do our part to stop the spread of COVID-19/coronavirus in our community. We are taking the necessary steps to be in compliance with directives from church and government authorities. This will mean inconveniences and interruptions along this uncharted path that opens before us in the present hour. Recommended practices (to adopt or to refrain from) have changed and will change with the moment. More information from the chancery and from our parish office will come at appropriate times.

Meanwhile, be careful to overindulge in passing the time alone in moments of sorrow and fear. Limit your time on the TV (whether watching the latest developments with the coronavirus or watching too many entertainment shows). Develop a routine that gives you purpose and peace. Dedicate a room or space in your home as your 'domestic church or shrine' with religious articles on the wall or on tables to remind you of God's love and mercy, the love of the Mother of God, and other inspiring saints. Maybe this is the time to read your Christmas gift from the parish: Rediscovering the Saints. *"A family that prays together*

*stays together.*” Do your children know how to pray the Rosary? This is a good time to teach them this prayer during your family time for prayer and devotions. Turn off all the noises in the house and have a daily, regular time for family peace, presence and prayer. There should be a sacred space in your home for quiet prayer where God can dwell in your hearts uninterrupted for a time.

Additional information will come to you for additional religious or spiritual resources, including: watching daily Mass, listening to inspirational talks, special devotions, etc. Make these moments a time for personal spiritual growth and for the strengthening of relationships with our families. This is not a time to be hidden and reclusive. Reach out to others; contact a senior citizen, or an elderly relative and engage in positive conversations with them and assure them of your prayers, even praying with them online or over the phone.

While all public Mass times have been suspended in all parish churches during the next few weeks, the Archbishop invites us *“to consider the upcoming fast” from the Eucharist as a way to draw ever closer to our Lord, especially as we experience a more intense longing for Jesus, present in the Eucharist. During this time of Eucharistic fasting, I would encourage each of us to offer intercessory prayer each day for the health and safety of our community, especially healthcare workers, and to join in solidarity with the many Catholics throughout the world who regularly are unable to receive Communion, due to persecution or to an absence of priests.*”

I plan to communicate with you again the days ahead. Remember to pray for your fellow parishioners here at St. George. Our community of faith is an inspiration to me in so many wonderful ways. I know that you view and treat each other as brothers and sisters in the Lord in very commendable ways.

The Lord will be with us in these forthcoming days! Let us make room in our hearts to receive His comforting words, His own compassionate Sacred Heart, and as the New Moses, may He lead us through this present land of woe and anxiety ‘to a land rich with milk and honey,’ to taste and savor His very own Goodness and Grace! Going forward now, in my daily private Mass I will continue to hold your special intentions with a pastoral heart. Peace be with you all!

Your devoted pastor, praying for the welfare of our families,

Fr. Mark Juettner