

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ of St. Rita Parish,

I hope this letter finds all of you safe and healthy as this most difficult time of the COVID-19 pandemic persists. As we make our way through this Easter Season, I want to share with you some important news and offer some updates:

1. ***Alleluia!*** Alleluia is the word of praise and proclamation for us Christians, Christ is risen and has brought His saving power to bear in our lives. **Our Alleluia today comes to us in the form of a *limited* reopening of St. Rita Church for the offering of Masses.** Archbishop Sample, working within the framework established by Governor Brown in her Executive Order 20-12 and her plan to re-open Oregon published on May 7th, has given permission for parishes – each according to their own circumstances and ability – begin to have Masses with up to **25** people. **Here at St. Rita we will recommence the offering of public Masses the weekend of June 6 - June 7. Until that weekend, for Sundays May 17, 24 and 31, I will continue to offer a private Mass early in the morning and the Church will be open 8 am – 12 noon for private prayer with exposition of the Blessed Sacrament for Adoration. If you wish to go to Confession, simply ring the doorbell at the parish office and I will accommodate Confessions. Thank you for your patience as we make preparations to re-open for Mass.**

Please note that this limited reopening for Masses will not be a return to “normal” and that we can only recommence and continue public Masses if we as a parish satisfy all the requirements for physical distancing, sanitizing, limits to size of gathering, and all the directives published by the Archdiocese for the reopening of Churches. Nevertheless, it is a way to begin to offer worship to God in the offering of the Mass, as is our vocation and duty, and to provide essential access to the Eucharist for all of you, the faithful, who desire to receive our Lord. Please keep in mind these important reminders:

- We are limited to 25 people per Mass. Because the Sunday Mass Obligation continues to be dispensed, one can attend Mass any day of the week. As staff organizes sign-ups for Mass, which are required, we may add additional Masses during the weekdays/nights to accommodate those who want to attend Mass.
- Dispensation from the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation continues – no one has to come, but it is now a possibility for those who wish.
- Those who are vulnerable, at-risk, or otherwise concerned persons are encouraged to stay home and stay safe according to your state in life and informed conscience.

- Those who are sick, feverish, coughing or with other symptoms *must* stay home and are not allowed in the church.

What we will do

Those who attend Mass do so at their own risk. To mitigate the risk, the following are the directives that we all must follow in order to recommence and continue with the offering of public Masses. These are not optional:

- Provide appropriate physical distancing for everyone (6 ft between each person at all times, with the exception of member of the same household), even in the Communion line.
- Clean and disinfect the church after each use.
- Follow the requirement that all participants wear masks. *Please remove masks for receiving Communion.*
- Keeping people in the church for as little time as possible to celebrate Mass with reverence. All Masses will follow a simple form of celebration without the choir and the minimal number of essential ministers in order to allow as many as 25 into the Church at a given Mass.
- Maintain the legal limit of no more than 25 persons at a given Mass *by invitation or sign-ups only*. Staff and volunteers will be coordinating the sign-ups for the Masses.

How can I come? (Watch for instruction memo...coming soon!)

- Sign up for our *Mass pool* in advance with your first name, last name, and contact number, and we will equitably begin inviting you to a Mass. *You must sign up, you can't show up. Maximum 25 people per Mass!*
- Once invited, enter 15 minutes before each Mass through the main church entrance door only. No one who simply shows up for a Mass can be allowed entrance.
- Other parishes will also be doing some type of sign-up system. We do ask you not to sign up for the Mass pool in multiple parishes, including the Grotto.

We are excited for this opportunity and taking all recommendation from the Governor's office, the CDC, and the Archbishop's office very seriously. We have consulted with two other dioceses that have already reopened and 9 other parishes and feel very confident that we are acting wisely and doing our best to begin providing access to the Eucharist for your spiritual good. As we learn more and see how things go, there may be changes, please bear with us.

To begin, our Mass and Confession schedule will be as follows throughout the week:

Mass Schedule

- **Monday – Thursday – 8:00 AM in the church**
- **Saturday – 5:30 PM in the church**
- **Sunday – 7:30 AM and 10:00 AM in the church**

Confession

Saturdays' between 4 and 5 PM – Ring doorbell at church office door

We look forward to celebrating Mass together with you! Alleluia!

2. **Staffing and Priest Assignment:** As some of you know, Lisa was planning to retire and that a new priest would be assigned to St. Rita's as Pastor. Recently, due to many factors, especially out of an abundance of concern for our parish, Lisa communicated to the Archbishop that she is willing to delay her retirement until June 30, 2021. The Archbishop gratefully and sincerely thanked Lisa for this and informed her that she can certainly continue as the Parish Administrator. This also means that I will remain at St. Rita for at least the next year as Priest Moderator. **In effect, there will be no change in parish administration after July 1.** All parties involved felt that this will help provide stability and growth during this time of COVID-19 and especially as the parish re-opens its ministries and emerges from this current crisis. I think I can say in union with all parishioners a huge "Thank You!" to Lisa for her generosity and true service to the Church.
3. As Masses will re-commence in a few weeks, the issues of when and under what circumstances do we celebrate the sacraments of RCIA, infant/child baptisms, First Communion and Confirmations naturally arises. As of now nothing has been decided but Lisa is working with Barbara and Stacey in making decisions on how and when to celebrate these sacraments. Our candidates, catechumens and those preparing for the sacraments have been very patient during this time and we do not want to unnecessarily delay any more than we have to the reception of the respective sacraments. The Archbishop has given me the faculties to confirm all those who need confirmation (including our young confirmandi) therefore the regular celebration with the bishop together with neighboring parishes will not happen this year. Since we can schedule these sacraments according to what works for the parish, we will need to decide whether to wait until the State allows larger gatherings in order to celebrate the sacraments with a full church on a Sunday sometime later this year or alternately to celebrate the sacraments in smaller groups in church so long as the State and Archdiocese only permit small gatherings of people (with health precautions taken into consideration). Lisa will be

discussing these issues with Barbara and Stacey, and once a decision is reached it will be communicated to everyone.

4. St. Vincent de Paul Food Pantry continues its vital ministry of feeding the poor. If you are in need, please contact Chris Kresek of our St Rita SVdP food pantry at (503) 665-3721 or email ckresek1@gmail.com.
5. In addition, if you and/or your family are want to get outside, the weather is finally nice and sunny and our permanently-existing parish grounds need some attention and Spring Cleaning after a messy and rainy Winter. If you are looking for a project to help serve the parish community, this is a great way to get out of the house! If you do sign up to help with the grounds-keeping, please keep in mind the social distancing orders. Lisa will be arranging with Stacey the sign-ups and organizing of this service project.

On behalf of Lisa, Msgr. Murphy and myself, thank you for your patience, prayers, financial support and deep faith during this difficult time. As we stay united in prayer and faith we know the Lord will protect us and help us as a parish to continue the mission of Christ in the future.

Yours in Christ,

Fr. Todd M. Molinari