

**Important Message from the Pastor
of the Church of Saint Mary, Rutherford**

Dear **Members of the Church of Saint Mary,**

Please be assured that you and your loved ones are not only in my prayers, you are also in the prayers and concerns of Cardinal Tobin, who has asked us Pastors to assure you that we are doing all we can to keep everyone as safe as possible. While no one knows what the future holds, and as many have said, we did not even imagine what disciplines and sacrifices this Lent would demand of us - we still look forward to a joy-filled Easter.

The last publicly celebrated Mass was held Tuesday, March 17, Saint Patrick's Day, until **AT LEAST** the Saturday Vigil Mass for Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion, April 4. Please watch the Mass on TV, if possible, as on [EWTN] or at least spend some time in prayer on Sunday since the **Church** will be **OPEN**.

Funerals will be celebrated as needed, and for no more than 10 people, including the celebrant; the option remains to have the burial only, with the limited number of people, and a Memorial Mass at a future date when all restrictions are lifted.

Friday Stations of the Cross, the annual Minister's Gathering on the 4th Sunday of Lent, and Midday Communion Services are cancelled.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation [Penance or Confession]. No Penance Services may be conducted until after Easter; Confessions **WILL** be heard **IN THE DAILY MASS CHAPEL, NOT THE SMALL RECONCILIATION ROOM**, at the usual time on Saturday at 4:00 PM; please be as brief as possible.

Eucharistic Adoration. During the regular **WEEKEND** Mass times: 3:30 PM - 5:30 PM Saturday and 7:30 AM - 12:30 PM Sundays - the Blessed Sacrament will be exposed on the Altar for private Prayer - **IF ENOUGH EUCHARISTIC MINISTERS AND OTHERS 'sign up'** so the Blessed Sacrament is not left unattended. [During **SOME** of these times, I will **TRY** to be available for Confessions; again, please be as brief as possible.]

The Church is USUALLY open 8:00 AM - 5:00 PM Monday - Friday and 9:00 AM - 5:30 PM on Saturday and 7:30 AM to 12:30 PM on Sunday.

Please keep a safe distance from each other [at least 10 feet] during visits to the church as you pray before the Blessed Sacrament, Walk the Stations, etc.

We will communicate any updates via our website [www.stmaryrutherford.org], our **bulletin** (available at the doors of the Church and at www.stmaryrutherford.org) and via blast emails if we have your email. If you did not receive our blast email this week when these restrictions went into effect, we likely do not have your current email address. Please contact the Parish Office to have your email information updated.

For those who have children in Sacrament Prep: **ALL CHILD-BASED EVENTS** [Classes, Children's Liturgy of the Word (CLOW) & Sacrament Prep sessions] are **cancelled**. As of now, the dates and times for First Holy Communion and Confirmation remain unchanged, and the remaining preparation work for these special Sacraments will be completed by you - with the help of the Parish staff. We are looking into other ways to fulfill the Confirmation Retreat requirement, even on an individual basis, and will be in contact with you. 'We Celebrate' First Eucharist Book should be completed at home and dropped off at the Parish so it can be 'graded;' it will be returned to you on FHC day.

Thanks to all who continue to **support St. Mary** and the Archdiocese of Newark through the Archbishop's "**2020 Annual Campaign**" by sending in their sacrificial offering during these very unsettling, uncharted times. Although we cannot celebrate public liturgies, and almost all Parish and School events have been cancelled, all of our expenses are still the same, much of our work goes on behind the scenes and the **Church is OPEN**. None of us knows the future but we do know that God's love and protection of His Holy Church will continue.

May you and your family and loved ones remain safe, grow spiritually, and become closer to our God and your loved ones.

With my love and my prayers for God's protection,

Father Michael (Mike) Kreder, Pastor

Here are some highlights from our Cardinal's comforting words, which you may also find - with updates - on the Archdiocesan website: www.rcan.org.

Temporary Suspension of Public Masses. All public Masses and Service throughout the Archdiocese of Newark will be temporarily suspended beginning March 18 and resume no earlier than April 3, 2020, when the situation will be re-evaluated as circumstances unfold. Televised or online celebrations of the Mass and other religious programming are available for use of the faithful on several television channels.

Adoration and Private Prayer. Churches should remain open for prayer, private devotion, and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Pastors are asked to consider Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament for a period of time during the day. Praying in large groups, however, should be avoided. In all situations, participants should be encouraged to observe social distancing practices, recommending 10 feet of space between participants, for any event inside church spaces.

Temporary Suspension of Penance Services. The Sacrament of Penance should remain available according to need, but public Penance Services are not to be conducted. Priests are to take reasonable precautions between the penitent and confessor.

Holy Week and Sacred Triduum. Any decisions in regard to the celebration of Holy Week, the Chrism Mass and the Sacred Triduum will be made as we monitor the situation.

Our Lady Queen of the Most Holy Rosary, pray for us!