

September 5, 2020



Dear Parishioners,

Well, here it is, Labor Day Weekend and what would have been normally a very busy time for the parish. Game booths would have been set up, rides erected, tables, tents and chairs scattered everywhere, lights glowing, music resounding, the smell of food tempting us, and the sounds of laughter filling the air as the Annual Parish Festival would be underway. Ah, the good-ole-days! While we are saddened that circumstances have prevented us from our usual festal gathering, we look to the hope that next year our festival will return better than ever! Our spirits may be subdued, but our hope will always endure. Our community is still alive with great people who care and are ready to do what it takes to assist with our parish goals and desires. As the pastor, I feel truly blessed each day to be a part of such a loving community and look forward to many more years of service.

I want to give you a few updates on where we are with our return together with the direction of Bishop Brennan and his team of people who have been working very hard to assist all parishes throughout the Diocese during these difficult times. I thank the Bishop for his leadership. I am sure that, as a recently appointed Bishop of our Diocese, he was not expecting to have to face this, but he has been a true leader and has felt the concerns of all. Please remember him in your prayers.

St. Michael School

Our School has already begun classes for the year and the excitement is very refreshing. While many adjustments have had to be made for the safety of the students, faculty and staff, we are very confident that everything that can be possibly done is being done, thanks to the planning and leadership of our principal, Sr. John Paul, O.P. Her attention to detail and ability to get things done has proven to be a great asset for us. I thank her, as well as the school and parish staff who have done so much in this time. Also, a shout out goes to Steve Moore, our Campus Facility and Safety Manager, and our custodian Jim McCabe, who also have put in many hours of hard work to make this happen.

As I have mentioned before, in order to meet the requirements for a safe opening, we have had to utilized extra-space in the other parish buildings. This will affect the day to day operation of the parish in general and will be described in the sections that follow. I thank you all for your patience and understanding

Sunday Masses

You all know that we have returned to our regular weekend Sunday Mass schedule. This would not have been possible if it weren't for our dedicated staff who have been working hard all summer to prepare for this and assisting with the planning process. Also, the work of the Parish Pastoral Council who facilitated the organization of sanitizing crews for weekend Masses, funerals and wedding has been most appreciated. The many parish organizations who answered the call from the council shows what can happen when we all work together for the same goal and the good of the parish community at large. Just to say thank you does not seem enough to express the true gratitude that I have for all they have done. God bless you!

Weekday Masses

I have had several inquiries about weekday Masses. As you know, we usually have offered two weekday Masses (Monday, Wednesday – Friday @ 6:30am and 8:15am; Tuesday @ 6:30am & 7:00pm; Saturday @ 8:15am). In the first phase of our reopening, we made some adjustments in our cleaning schedule to allow for the priority of weekend masses. So, right now, we do not have a cleaning staff person who is here on Wednesday, but is here on Sundays in order to clean restrooms, Marian Hall, the sacristy, etc. As a result, we currently are only offering weekday Masses at 6:30am on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. I chose this time because the 6:30am Mass has the history of being the largest attended Mass during the week. For those who would have wanted to go to a later Mass, we have encouraged them to attend at other local area churches nearby. Also, cleaning and sanitizing between Masses in the morning has not been feasible.

Another consideration for the 8:15am Mass has been waiting to see how the school class Masses would affect attendance. I did not wish to start having these Masses too soon only to have to change the schedule again in case things did not work out. As it is, when we factor in the number of students, teachers and staff and the available space in the church for seating with social distancing requirements, we would be at or very near our capacity under the current restrictions. This would not leave much, if any, room for others to attend Masses. Also, we must factor in the occasional funeral celebrations that occur during the week and the need to clean and sanitize after these take place. So, for the time being, while we will eventually start having Masses at the 8:15am Mass times, these will only be able to be attended by the school students and staff until this crisis passes us by. I have chosen this course in order to lessen the chance of exposure to the students and others to the virus. Also, the Tuesday evening Mass will continue to be suspended as we will not be able to ensure that the church is properly cleaned for the Wednesday morning Masses once they do start up. The same applies for the Saturday morning Masses as we will reserve this time for funerals and weddings. All of this is not intended to be permanent, but only temporary. I am sorry for the inconvenience that this may cause for some, but it is necessary at least until I get a better understanding of how long these circumstances will last.

Adoration

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament has also been an important part of our parish life. It has been my desire to return to this safely. But consideration needed to be made about when and how this would be possible in light many factors, including the of space in our chapel. We are currently in the process of replacing the carpet in the chapel, as it has come loose. Once that is completed, we will move on to the next steps in opening the chapel. Please note however, there will have to be some restrictions in place because of the size of the chapel. We will most likely start off with limited hours of access. And for now, adoration with the Blessed Sacrament in a tabernacle instead of exposition will take place until we know what to expect. More information will be forthcoming when we are ready to proceed.

Parish Building Access

With added school traffic in all our parish buildings, we must now be sure to treat these as we would the school building, so security has been tightened. Therefore, access to the main Church, Parish Ministry Center and Marian Hall will be restricted from 7:00am-6:00pm on school days to students, parish, and school staff only. Facility use outside of these times by anyone must be arranged with the parish office during normal business hours, Monday through Friday 8:30am – 3:30pm.

Communion to Homebound

We have now been given the go ahead to have priests, deacons and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion to take communion to those who are homebound. This may also include parishioners who are in the high-risk group who have been staying at home because of the pandemic. It is necessary for everyone to follow the precautions for social distancing, wearing of masks, washing and sanitizing of hands, etc. Individuals who are to receive the Eucharist (and their family members, if possible) should be consulted to determine their comfort level of having the Eucharist brought to them in their homes. Please note this does not include those who reside in nursing homes or are in hospitals, as many of them are still under visitor restrictions.

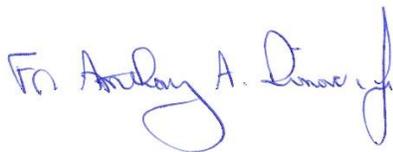
Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion who would like to volunteer are asked to contact the parish office. Only Extraordinary Ministers who are not in the high-risk category should consider volunteering.

Lastly

Just one final note of thanks to all of you! Without your continued support and prayers, none of us would have been able to accomplish what needed and needs to be done. I know that this has been difficult for everyone. Each of us have been and continue to be at different comfort level stages with the current circumstance. Not all of us agreed as to what should have been done and how to do it. However, I have great hope that this will pass, and we will look back on how we at least did come together and made the best of a very difficult situation. As your pastor, I ask for you continued prayers for me, for our Parochial Vicar, Fr. Herge, our deacons, religious sisters, parish staff, teachers, school support staff and volunteers who have been very responsive to the challenges that we have faced. “With God, all things are possible” (Matthew 19:26b).

May God bless each of your families with the hope of his Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, the intercession of Immaculate Mary and St .Michael the Archangel, our patron saint, and all the heavenly hosts of saints and angels who are before the throne of God.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Fr. Anthony A. Dinovo, Jr." The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial 'D'.

Fr. Anthony A. Dinovo, Jr.
Pastor