

Dear Parishioners of St. Paul Parish:

May the peace of Christ be with you!

Over these last few weeks, we have all observed the unfolding of the coronavirus and steps being taken on all levels of society in an attempt to impede the disease being spread. On March 3rd Archbishop Blair issued instructions related to the celebration of the liturgy that were put in place immediately for those who are daily communicants and for the parish as a whole on the weekend of March 7 & 8. These guidelines also reminded everyone that should they be ill, they should not attend Mass out of charity for the others in church as well as for their own benefit.

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) believes the symptoms of COVID-19 may appear in as few as 2 days or as long as 14 days after exposure. The Archdiocese of Hartford, in an effort to try to minimize the transmission among staff, has directed that all employees, volunteers, and clergy who leave the country (outside of the United States and its territories), which includes individuals who are on cruises, are required to self-quarantine at home, effective with the first day the individual returns home, for a period of fourteen (14) days. In keeping with this guideline, it is recommended that any parishioner who falls into this category should also exempt themselves from any parish event including Mass and any other meeting or gathering.

On Thursday, March 12th Archbishop Blair issued the following more explicit statement regarding both weekend and weekday Mass attendance. To read a letter from Archbishop Blair [click this link](#).

As regards Sunday attendance he said: Effective immediately and through Sunday, March 29, the Archbishop has dispensed from the obligation of attending Sunday Mass the elderly and those of any age who fear for their health or the health of their families. Anyone who is ill or showing symptoms is already obliged not to attend. Parishioners who are absent from Mass are urged to make alternate provision for their weekly contributions since parishes depend on this for their operation.

Our entire weekend Mass schedule will continue as normal. Doing so will allow us to have a larger space for people who do attend to be comfortable in. All are encouraged to keep suitable distance from each other. It is up to each individual to make the decision whether or not they should attend Mass. As you might expect the least attended Mass is Sunday at 7:30 a.m.

All Masses celebrated at St. Paul Church are live streamed from [our website](#). The 10:30am Mass on Sunday is also streamed on Facebook. To watch Mass online, either live or recorded, visit <https://stpaulkensington.org/live> and click on the broadcast window. If a Mass is underway, the video will begin immediately. If Mass is not currently live at St. Paul, you can click on 'previous broadcasts' to view a previously recorded Mass. Daily Mass is also available on TV.

Those who are **liturgical ministers** are likewise free to exercise their best judgment about attending Mass. If you choose not to attend Mass do your best to find a replacement, but if not able just notify the person you usually do and we will make do.

As regards Weekday Mass attendance: Daily Masses, Eucharistic adoration or other liturgies that are celebrated in a more confined space in small chapels should be moved to the larger church building so that participants can maintain a safer, healthier distance from one another.

We are blessed at St. Paul's to have a very large worship space. The people who attend weekday Mass tend to be spread out naturally, but now maybe even a little bit more so. **All other currently planned liturgical events will continue.** Specifically this includes:

- **Mercy Mondays** during Lent where we confessors are available from 7 to 8 p.m. along with exposition of the Blessed Sacrament;
- The **Tuesday Holy Hours** from 4 p.m. to 5 p.m.;
- **Saturday confessions** from 8:30 a.m. to 9:30 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.
- **Stations of the Cross** on Fridays at Sacred Heart Church at 7 p.m.

During Mass we are reminded:

- At the time of the Sign of Peace all should avoid any physical contact with others. This of course goes to times outside of Mass as well.
- ALL are **strongly encouraged** out of charity and concern for your fellow parishioners' health and well being to receive Holy Communion in the hand only. While one has the right to receive the Eucharist on the tongue does not mean one has to exercise that right.

ALL school related liturgical functions are canceled until St. Paul School re-opens. Specifically, the following are canceled:

- School Masses scheduled for March 19 & March 26
- Children's Station of the Cross scheduled for March 20 & March 27

The Parish Offices will be open as usual.

As regards St. Paul School and Religious Education Program:

St. Paul School is following the lead of the Berlin Public Schools and will be closed for at least two weeks from March 16 - 27. ALL student related activities scheduled in school or outside of school are cancelled. Separate communication has been sent to all school families.

Similarly, ALL St. Paul Religious Education Classes and any associated activities are also canceled for the same time period that the Berlin Public Schools are closed. Separate communication has been sent to all families with children in the Religious Ed program.

As regards Parish programs, fund raisers, events, etc. the Archdiocese said:

The request for prudence and good judgment also applies to all parish programs, fund raisers, events, dinners, etc. Decisions should be made in keeping with the directives that have been made by the national, state and local authorities, especially the local municipality and school district. The goal is to stop propagating the virus as a result of exposure at gatherings of people, especially

larger gatherings, and people are to be kept away from close proximity to one another as much as possible.

The St. Paul School auction is scheduled for March 28th and has an attendance normally of about 250 people and raises about \$75,000 for the school has been under serious discussion and will be addressed in a separate statement.

All other programs that the parish or associated ministries and organizations are holding involve relatively small numbers of people and the spaces they are held in are not confining. In some cases though an organization may decide to cancel or postpone a meeting.

At this time the following events WILL continue:

Scripture Study Groups for March 16 & 18 are contacting those who signed up to see if they will attend. These five groups meet individually and at its largest have 10 participants. The location for these groups may be moved to the St. Paul Parish Hall.

Knights of Columbus Blood Drive will continue as scheduled on Thursday, March 19th from 1 p.m. to 6 p.m. in the St. Paul Parish Hall.

Foodshare distribution will be held on Friday, March 20th at Sacred Heart Church.

The **Lenten Reflections** scheduled for March 22 & 26 will take place as scheduled.

The following **WILL NOT** take place:

All youth related activities are canceled until Berlin Schools re-open. Therefore, the following are canceled:

Both the IGNITE and EDGE Youth Groups
Boy Scout meetings held at St. Paul
ALL St. Paul School student activities

The following parish groups/ministries have suspended meeting:

Social Action Ministry has canceled their March meeting
Men's Group on Sunday evenings

If in doubt about if the organization you belong to is meeting, you should contact the head of that group.

The Archdiocese has canceled or postponed all of the following:

March 17: FACS St. Patrick's Day Breakfast
March 22: St. Joseph Medal Ceremony
March 28: Missio Faith Formation Congress
March 29: Mass & Listening Session for Deacons' Wives and Widows

April 15: CT March for Life
St. Patrick's Day Parades (in Hartford and New Haven)
Performances of "Tolton: From Slave to Priest" by Saint Luke Productions
St. Thomas Parish in Southington has canceled ALL presentations of the Passion Play this year.

Be assured that we are doing our best to impede the spread of this disease through aggressive cleaning. To reduce the spread of disease we have put in place additional cleaning protocols in the school, in both of our worship sites, Parish Hall, and the Parish Center. In our churches all surfaces that are regularly touched are being wiped down with the recommended solutions. This includes especially the tops of the pews, the hardware on the doors, handrails, the missal covers, and other surface tops. Extra cleaning is also being done in the lavatories. At St. Paul's this is being done on a daily basis.

During this time, let us help each other by prayer and by trusting in God. Let us help each other, especially those who may be most worried and fearful. We pray to those who are infected and those who are working to stabilize the situation and develop the necessary vaccines and provide the needed treatment.

**O holy Mother of God; despise not our petitions in our necessities,
but deliver us from all dangers, O glorious and blessed Virgin Mary.
May the Divine assistance remain always with us! Amen.**

Peace and all Good,

Fr. Joe