



ST. LEO THE GREAT
PARISH & SCHOOL

May 25, 2020

Dear Parishioner,

The pandemic that has swept throughout the world has made many of us prisoners of our homes for several weeks. Perhaps by now you have known someone personally who has died of COVID-19 or whose death has been hastened by it. Or maybe you know someone who has lost a loved one because of the coronavirus. Certainly life has been changed for all of us these past two months and we continue to pray that God will protect us and bless those who continue to fall ill and especially those who have died as a result of the virus.

Yet because of our faith in God and in His Son Jesus Christ, we continue to have hope and we entrust ourselves to God's loving care. It is in that spirit of hopefulness and joy that I wish to welcome you back to the public celebration of Mass which is at the heart of our worship and life as Catholics.

As much as I look forward to your return, I also plead with you to consider your own personal health situation and to make the decision to come to Mass or to stay at home for a while longer based on your age and your medical history. Again the Bishops of Ohio have dispensed all Catholics from the obligation to attend Mass until further notice. If you feel afraid or even unsure of whether or not you should be out in public, please take the safer path and remain at home, trusting that we who gather will be lifting you up in prayer.

Our first public Mass will be celebrated this weekend with our usual 4pm Mass on Saturday, May 30th, and our 8am and 11am Masses on Sunday, May 31st. This weekend the Church celebrates the feast of Pentecost, and so we hope to feel the divine presence of the Holy Spirit within us, enabling us to give thanks and praise to God as we contemplate God's love for us, the People of His Church!

Please know that we will be following the directives given by Governor DeWine and by our Diocesan Administrator in union with the Ohio Bishops. Masks will be required and provided to you if you don't have one. You may only enter the church through one of the two front doors, the one on the rectory side of the building by our chapel area or the one on the school side of the building by our music area. Maintenance people from the parish will be there so that you will not need to touch or open the door, and with your mask on, will be directed to a pew in the church, being careful to have 6 feet of space on all sides (you may of course sit with your household members). Please remember that this will be different from our normal experience of Mass. There will be singing only by the cantor so you will not find hymnals in the pews. The Sign of Peace will be omitted and we will not be offering the Communion cup. I will review the procedure for receiving Holy Communion before or during Mass. For the health and safety of all, reception of Holy Communion is strongly encouraged in the hand to avoid contact with individual's saliva. I will announce that all who wish to receive on the tongue should be last in the communion line to allow for proper sanitizing between each communicant.

Our first concern is for the health and welfare of those around us, especially those who are over 60 or who have a medical history which can put them more at risk. We will be careful to sanitize the rest rooms and pews before & after each Mass and will only use 50% of the maximum occupancy of the church. No one will be permitted to use the cry room. Please take your temperature before coming to Mass. Anyone with a temperature of 100.4 degrees or not feeling well should stay home.

Though some may be anxious to resume their regular practice of going to confession, I encourage you to wait for this sacrament until a later time as I will be busy giving instructions before Mass begins. If it is a necessity, I can hear your confession outside after Mass (weather permitting) or with social distancing in the church itself. But I remind you of the words of Pope Francis who recently said *"Do what the Catechism (of the Catholic Church) says. It is very clear. If you cannot find a priest to confess to, speak directly with God, your Father, and tell him the truth. Say, 'Lord, I did this, this, this. Forgive me,' and ask for pardon with all your heart."* *Make an act of contrition, the pope said, and promise God, "I will go to confession afterward, but forgive me now." And immediately you will return to a state of grace with God."*

I am happy to announce that we are beginning to live stream the Mass every day so that those who do not yet feel ready to be physically present with us, or those who are normally homebound will be able to join us for Mass either at the time the Mass is being celebrated, or at a later time that is convenient to you as all our Masses will be able to view on demand. You can view our live and recorded Masses on our website, Facebook page, Instagram (leothegreatorg) or Twitter (leothegreatorg). We hope you will feel more at home participating at a Mass from your own parish church when you are not able to be physically with us.

As of May 26th, our rectory office will re-open Monday through Friday from 9am until 3pm and will be open Saturday (Noon-5:30pm) & Sunday (9am-12:30pm), but the information desk in the church vestibule will be closed. Again we ask that you wear one of the provided masks when entering the rectory office, as our office staff will be doing the same. Please feel free to call us with any questions or concerns (216-661-1006). You may also email us at info@leothegreat.org.

Our website (leothegreat.org) always has the most up-to-date information (including a copy of this letter) and it's possible for you to do many things there that are done in our rectory office or church, like purchase Sweepstakes tickets, make donations, have us light a vigil candle for you, etc.

Please know of my continued daily prayer for you as we seek God's help during these times.

In Christ,



Father James P. Schmitz
Pastor