24 April 2020

Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Greetings to each of you and praying that these on-going days of Easter continue to fill your hearts with gladness and rejoicing! If you are like me, you have had a lot more time than usual to reflect on the Resurrection of Jesus Christ and how that moment completely changed our lives; how it offers to us now the hope of life eternal. If nothing else, our current realities have given us a different perspective on what had become “normal” and often times taken for granted.

With this letter/communication, it is my hope to share with you some very early level conversations that might assist us in thinking ahead to the time when we will be able to transition gradually into re-opening our church. As well, just to share with you what is happening here in the parish.

First, I want to again say Thank You to all of you who out of care for the people of our world have “sheltered-in-place” these past several weeks. As Bishop Garcia has noted, it is indeed a time of sacrifice and an opportunity to offer our suffering for those who are grieving the death of one they love, who are themselves fighting to recover their health, and for those struggling to provide for their families. There is so much pain and suffering in our world today, may we truly be willing to offer these days as our sacrifice for them. So, thank you for doing your part to help keep as many safe and healthy as possible.

We continue to hear of those whose patience has been tested, those who have chosen to protest and disregard orders that are meant to protect us. But we are Christians, we are followers of Christ and we need to remember and be strengthened and encouraged that first and foremost we are called to protect the dignity of human life... we must think of others rather than how we feel “my life has been inconvenienced.”

Currently we are in week five of “shelter-in-place” and so it seems reasonable that we desire to begin some kind of planning for a transition that we know will eventually happen. At this point, all of the conversations in which I have participated via social media, it is clear that the idea of social distancing will remain with us for some time. That certainly complicates how one plans to open a church for regular Masses. We have not received guidelines to date of how that might look for us. However, we might imagine the possibility of sitting in every-other pew, and unless family members how to maintain an appropriate distance between persons sitting in the same pew. While we have seven Masses each weekend, it is clear that we would not be able to get everyone into church on any given weekend. To that end, we already know that we will need to develop a means of “live-streaming” our Masses so that those who are most frail in health and susceptible to a virus and those not able to get into a “full” church may still participate in the life of our parish.

Too, this reality would suggest that we would need to develop a means by which our homebound would be able to receive Holy Communion (at the time we are able to do so again). This would most likely fall to family members and to those with whom our homebound feel most comfortable. Undoubtedly we would provide some preparation/training for persons to be able to fulfill this ministry of care and compassion.
I offer these not as a “factual decision already made”, but as a means to help us all understand that things will be different…they cannot be as they were for our world has now changed and a new “normal” is developing.

For many of our parishioners who have children and adolescents, you are wondering about the celebration of Sacraments: First Holy Communion and Confirmation. We had dates set for these Sacraments in mid-May. However, we now know that we will not be back and ready for those celebrations. Depending on how the opening of churches takes place, we will evaluate and make a good decision about how best to celebrate First Communions so that it will truly be the celebration it should be. Also, for Confirmation, our Bishop Garcia would very much like to preside at that Sacrament as normal, but again, depending on timing and scheduling he may delegate the pastor to preside at and celebrate that Sacrament. Again, there are many factors upon which these decisions depend. I assure you that I will do my best to communicate with all of you as quickly as possible once I receive more information.

For our RICA Elect, all nine of them, I have no doubt they are very anxious and are so longing to receive these Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist. I would ask that as a parish we keep them in our prayers and we encourage them during this time of waiting.

We have had one change in parish personnel which became official on April 1, 2020: Deacon Jim Burrows has been reassigned by Bishop Garcia to assist at the Cal Poly Newman Center in coordination with Father Gerry Robinson who remains as Director. Deacon Jim will also be assisting Father Gerry with ministry at the jail. We wish Deacon Jim many blessings as he steps (or eventually will) into a new ministry and that it will truly be a gift of grace in his life.

As of yesterday, I am so happy to say, we are only $450 short of meeting our AMA goal for 2020! My friends, that means as a parish we were able to collect $41,000 to support diocesan ministries in the past two months…faster than ever, and we were not even gathered here in church for the entire last month. I want to congratulate all of you who participated and offered your support for a job well done. Most impressive was that we jumped from 118 people participating to nearly 370! Thank You!

Finally, I want to give an update on how work is coming on the parish Rectory. As you recall, we were given a house by Bea Jeong with the hopes that the priests would live there. Due to many reasons the home was not a practical solution. Last July we sold that home and the money was restricted for the sole purpose of remodeling the parish Rectory and the Parish Office in order to honor Bea’s wishes. Because of timing, the decision was made to begin with the Rectory. Those who are working very hard on this project are constantly saying to us: “Wow! This place was tired.” As of today, the upstairs is basically completed. We are awaiting now cabinets for the kitchen, painting of downstairs, and the flooring. Throughout the process they replaced much of the electrical wiring and plumbing and made other “repairs” along the way. They are doing a beautiful job and it will be a Rectory made livable for many years to come. No completion date yet.

As you can see, life has not stopped here at the parish…although it has slowed down. We continue to miss all of you and look forward to that glorious day when we will be able to interact on a more personal level. Be assured of our on-going prayers for good health, peace, and abundant blessings!

In the Risen Christ,

Fr. Kelly