

25 March 2020 Solemnity of the Annunciation

Dear Friends in Christ,

I pray you are all staying well during this difficult time in the history of our country and the Church. Please know that I have continued to remember all of you in my prayers, and especially at the altar. I wanted to give you the most recent updates that will affect us as Catholics in South Carolina.

- Catholic schools remain closed through April 30
- Churches remain closed until further notice, and at least through Holy Week and Easter
- The church and Our Lady of Peace will remain open for private prayer on Wednesdays and Fridays from 9am until 3pm.
- Our parish's celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation, which was scheduled for April 24, is postponed and will be rescheduled.
- **Confessions remain suspended until further notice; however, please be reminded that, in the absence of availability of sacramental confession, an act of perfect contrition can obtain the forgiveness of sins. By "perfect contrition," the Church denotes an act of contrition that includes:**
 - **The love of God**
 - **The sincere desire for forgiveness and purpose of amendment**
 - **The ardent commitment to receive the Sacrament of Penance (Confession) as soon as it is available**
- In a similar vein, the **Church is granting the possibility of a plenary indulgence to those suffering from the coronavirus, healthcare workers, and those exposed to risk of contagion.**
 - **This indulgence is offered to those listed above who unite themselves spiritually through the media to:**
 - **The celebration of the Holy Mass**
 - **The recitation of the Holy Rosary**
 - **The Way of the Cross**

- **or if at least they will recite the Creed, the Lord's Prayer and a pious invocation to the Blessed Virgin Mary, offering this trial in a spirit of faith in God and charity towards their brothers and sisters, with the will to fulfil the usual conditions (sacramental confession, Eucharistic communion and prayer according to the Holy Father's intentions), as soon as possible.**
 - As with all indulgences, we should join to these pious practices prayers for the intentions of the Holy Father, at least a Spiritual Communion, and a firm purpose to confess sacramentally when it is available.
- The Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick remains suspended except in cases of danger of death
 - It should be noted that, in danger of death, sacramental confession will, of course, also be available

Beginning this Sunday, we will be livestreaming Mass in English and Spanish. For the 5th Sunday of Lent (March 29) and Palm Sunday (April 5), Mass will be streamed on our website and on Facebook at 9:30am in English and 10:30am in Spanish. We are adjusting the schedule in order to minimize the number of people entering and exiting the church. We also plan to livestream liturgies during the Sacred Triduum, and those times will be forthcoming in another update.

Many thanks to those who have continued to support the parish financially during this time. Some of you have asked about the possibility of a kind of drop box to simply be able to drop off checks. We are working to find a way to do this that is affordable. But in the meantime, please continue to support us via snail mail, and especially online. By the time we reopen our doors, it will have been (at least) over a month since our last public weekend of Masses. We want to continue to be able to pay our bills and our wonderful staff who also have families to support. Thank you so much for your attention to this!

Finally, I want to thank you for your continued prayers for me, for your fellow parishioners, and for all those suffering during this difficult time. We just celebrated the 4th Sunday of Lent, traditionally known as

Laetare (“Rejoice”) Sunday. During a time like this, it can be tough to see the cause for rejoicing. But as sons and daughters of God, we know that He is in control, and that He never allows us to suffer more than His grace can sustain us. Let us remain close to the Blessed Mother, and stand with her at the foot of the Cross, continuing to offer our whole lives to Him!

In Christ,

Fr West