

29 April 2020

Dear Parishioner of Blessed Trinity + Spirit of Christ:

Jesus himself drew near and walked with them.

Like those two persons we met this past Sunday on the way to Emmaus, we too have been on a journey, making our way through these difficult and challenging days, all the while keeping faith that Christ draws near and walks with us. We have welcomed him into our homes to eat and drink at our ordinary table, and we have recognized him there. Now our hope is stirred anew that the days are coming when we can gather again for Mass to recognize him in the breaking of the bread and in the food and drink of the Holy Eucharist.

Still, as we slowly begin to open the doors of our worship space, we are quick to recognize that the danger of the Corona Virus has far from subsided. Caution continues to be required; great care must be taken and our primary concern must always be the safety and protection of all our people, most especially those who are most vulnerable.

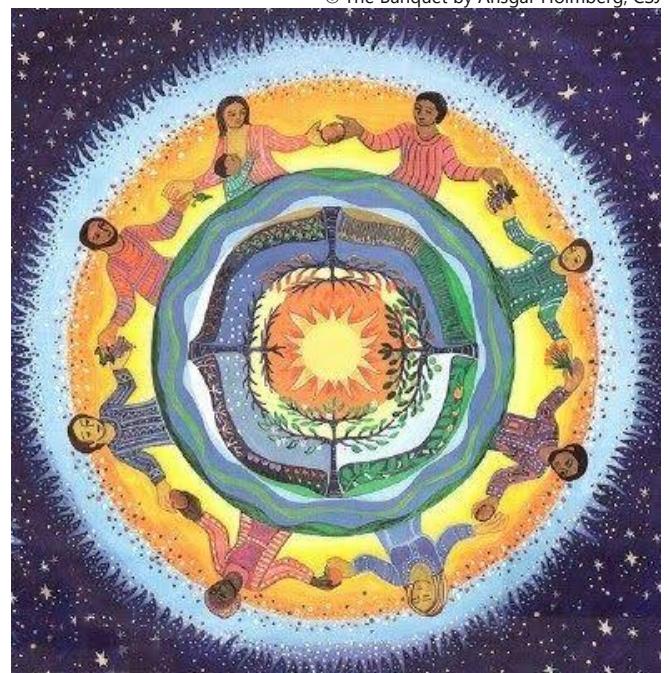
Bishop Vetter has issued guidelines for parishes to “re-open,” the **State of Montana** has set parameters and **Missoula County** has wisely set limits on the numbers of persons who can “safely” gather together. (*Bishop’s document can be found at blessedtrinitymissoula.org*)

Therefore, Blessed Trinity + Spirit of Christ will follow these procedures:

- ❖ The week of May 4 Blessed Trinity building will be thoroughly and professionally cleaned including the chairs (*this had been previously scheduled*). Spirit of Christ will also be cleaned.
- ❖ The regularly scheduled weekend **Masses will be reinstated on the weekend of May 9/10, 2020**: Blessed Trinity-Saturday 5:00 pm; Sunday 10:00 am; Spirit of Christ, Sunday 8:00 am.
- ❖ **NO MORE THAN 25 PERSONS MAY BE PRESENT AT ANY SINGLE GATHERING**, *in accord with Missoula County requirements. When and if this restriction is changed by Missoula county notification will be provided on the parish website with any additional information. (Daily Missoula County Health Department UPDATES are accessible on the parish website.)*
- ❖ **Entrance to the worship space will be through the Social Center (west side) entrance only.** A “hand sanitizer station” will be provided at that entrance. All are asked to “sanitize” your hands before entering the worship space.

If you have your own sanitizer, please bring and use, especially before Communion. Thank you.

- ❖ **Those who wish may wear protective masks.** Several will be available at the church entrance.
- ❖ **“Social distancing” protocols -6 feet between persons- will be required at all times** (when entering and leaving the church; with seating between non-family members); and during the communion procession. Chairs will be so arranged in both worship spaces.
- ❖ The Sign of Peace will not be shared;
- ❖ The Eucharistic Bread, the Body of Christ, will be distributed in the hand only.
- ❖ The Eucharistic Wine, the Blood of Christ, will not be offered.
- ❖ Social gathering (coffee and donuts, etc.) following Mass will not occur.



The limit of “no more than 25 persons” presents a particular challenge. How can persons be reasonably turned away from Mass? In order to respond to this “dilemma” we will adopt the following procedure until Missoula County changes or adapts this restriction.

Each week persons/families will be called by a member of the various parish leadership teams with an “invitation” to attend Mass. The calls will be made alphabetically. This will be coordinated through the parish office. At Blessed Trinity this will be for either the Saturday 5:00 pm Mass OR the Sunday 10:00 am Mass. This procedure will continue until the Missoula county “25 person limit” is revised. If you prefer not to be called because you feel unable to come to Mass at this time, particularly if you are in the “high-risk” category, please call (721-2405) or email (office@blessedtrinitymissoula.org) the parish office (leave a message for Carol). Bishop Vetter has dispensed the “obligation” to participate in Sunday Mass.

When the 25 person limit is changed, at both parishes chairs will be spaced throughout the worship area at six feet apart and the social center will be opened with chairs there at six feet apart, thereby expanding the number of potential participants, in accord with required guidelines. This will be done at both parishes for the duration of the “social distancing” guidelines.

NOTE: Parishes in Missoula and throughout the Missoula Deanery may be opening on different schedules. Since each parish is limited in terms of the number of persons who can participate it is essential that persons attend Mass only in their own parishes.

THESE LIMITATIONS ON OUR GATHERING, WHILE NECESSARY, ARE CONCERNING.

Safety must be our priority, but our sense of hospitality and welcome; our full, conscious and active participation in the liturgy (which is our right and duty by virtue of baptism); and our response to the command of Christ to eat and drink of his body and blood, must continue to shape and form our vision of who we are and who we are yet called to be. There can be no substitute for our actual presence together around the Lord’s Table. The sense of loss which we all feel from “distancing” and the inability to fulfill the command of Christ to “take and drink” should affirm in all of us a longing for the celebration of the Lord’s Supper in its fullness and deepen the value we place on Sunday Mass.

During these challenging days we remember that the burden we share is little compared to those who bear the illness of this virus disease and the families of those who have died. The difficulty we experience is little compared to the faithful courage of so many who serve those who are ill and risk their own safety to be present with them. The discomfort we endure is little compared to those who suffer the economic challenge imposed on so many. Indeed some us find ourselves among each of these. So let us continue to be faithful, caring and attentive so that all will be touched by the healing love of the one Good Shepherd who leaves us the example we should follow.

AS WE MOVE FORWARD we do so with a sense of hope trusting that the Lord is walking with us, guiding us on the way. The Gospel this Sunday (May 3) reminds us that Christ is the gate, the way in and the way out. We enter and go out through him trusting that we will dwell in the house of the Lord for years to come. So in all of this we are patient and we will continue to do what is good for the sake of others. This is a grace before God. It is the Lord who is our Shepherd.

Peace be with you.


Fr. Ed

Pastoral Staff, Pastoral Council,
Strategic Planning Team; Finance Council
Capital Campaign Team



Remember: The parish website is updated regularly. This serves as our primary means of communication. **The Bulletin** continues to be published each week and is available on the website and the smartphone: myparish app.

blessedtrinitymissoula.org