

May 21, 2020

Dear Parishioner of Blessed Trinity + Spirit of Christ:

This Sunday as we enter the reality and the mystery of the Lord's Ascension, we hear those early apostles, when they had gathered together, wonder and ask, "Lord, at this time are you going to restore the kingdom...?" Jesus' answer echoes through the ages to our current times: "It is not for you to know the times or seasons..."

At Blessed Trinity and Spirit of Christ we have slowly begun to gather again with some hesitancy, questions and continuing concerns. Like those first disciples we wonder when we will be restored; when will all become "normal;" and how will we enable a gathering while caring for one another and most especially for those at most risk? It is not yet the time for us to know; questions and anxieties continue to shape our lives and our faith. We do know that this "crisis of our times" is far from over; danger still lurks and so caution, shaped by loving care and service, continues to be required.

While our state and county continue the process of "opening" with a long-term goal of "returning to normal," we too begin that process. The past two weekends we have gathered with limited participation (25-30 persons at each Mass). Every parish household has been alphabetically invited by telephone to gather for Mass. Many have been enthusiastic to return while some others have rightly felt some hesitancy due to their own or family members health concerns. In some cases, messages were left with the request that a return phone call be made. There were some households that could not be reached by phone due to the absence of a working number. IF YOU FEEL THAT YOU WERE MISSED IN THE PHONE CALLING PLEASE CALL THE PARISH OFFICE SO THAT WE CAN UPDATE OUR INFORMATION.

When we will all be ready, "is not yet for us to know." At each gathering thus far, social distancing requirements have been met; 90 protective masks have been available (thanks to Louise Yamasaki) and hand sanitizing has been encouraged upon entering and before communion.

It continues to be important to remember that if you feel ill, or are in the "vulnerable population," it is best to remain at home. Utilize the many resources available on our parish website (blessedtrinitymissoula.org) for PRAYER AT HOME, renewed each week. (The gift of these days may be the re-discovery of the importance of the "domestic church," that is, "the Church at Home.")



Image ©Angar Holmberg, CSL

For all of us it is important to continue practicing the "good hygiene" principles.

As we continue to move forward, we will initiate the following procedures for the next two weekends:

Ascension, May 23/24

AT BLESSED TRINITY:

Saturday 5:00 pm: Those parishioners who normally participate in the Saturday 5:00 pm Mass throughout the year may begin to return (as long as safe distancing protocols can be maintained). In addition to the Worship Space, the social center will be opened for more seating.)

Sunday 10:00 am: Personal invitations via telephone will continue this week for Mass on Sunday, May 24. The calls will continue to be made alphabetically. Participants will be limited to a total number of 50-65 (with seating available in the social center.)

AT SPIRIT OF CHRIST:

With social distancing protocols in place 40-45 persons can easily be accommodated (seating will be available in the worship space and social area). Since regular participation is usually lower than this number, **Spirit of Christ is "open" for Sunday morning mass.**

Pentecost, May 30/31

Both parishes will be considered "open" for weekend Mass. Due to "social distancing requirements" seating at **Blessed Trinity** for each Mass

will be limited to 125 persons; seating at **Spirit of Christ** is available for 50.

Parishioners available to participate Saturday evening at Blessed Trinity are encouraged to do so.

Other General Considerations

- ❖ If you feel uncomfortable returning to Mass at this time, please be assured of the appropriateness of your choice. Bishop Vetter has dispensed the “obligation” to participate in Sunday Mass.
- ❖ **The importance of “social distancing protocols,” upon arrival, before Mass begins, during Mass and at the end of Mass, cannot be over-emphasized.**
- ❖ **The use of hand sanitizers** upon entering the worship space is highly recommended (available at church entrance); It is also helpful to use the sanitizer before coming to Holy Communion (available at the center aisle).
- ❖ When coming to communion maintain the “six-foot social distance” protocol.
- ❖ **Protective facial masks** are permitted and welcomed (some continue to be available at church entrance).
- ❖ **The Collection.** The sacrificial offering we make continues to be of vital importance. The basket, however, cannot be “passed.” A large basket will be in place at the entrance. Please place your offering there as you arrive or as you leave. **THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROUS OFFERING DURING THESE CHALLENGING DAYS.**
- ❖ **ENTRANCE TO THE WORSHIP SPACE CONTINUES TO BE VIA THE SOCIAL CENTER (WEST SIDE) ENTRANCE ONLY.**
- ❖ As always, the **worship aid** is provided at church entrance (*a new set for each Mass*). You may wish to take one home to accompany the **Ritual Sunday Supper at Home** Guide available on the parish website.

- ❖ **Liturgical Ministries.** A liturgical ministry schedule will be available on-line soon (it will also be mailed.) Three readers for each Mass (the two scripture readings and the Prayers of Intercession) and cross-bearer will be assigned for each Mass. An acolyte and one minister of Holy Communion (in addition to the priest) will be assigned (fewer than normal since receiving the Blood of Christ is temporarily suspended due to “virus concerns”).
- ❖ **All Social gatherings following Mass continue to be suspended.**
- ❖ Communion to the homebound continues to be suspended.
- ❖ The May 20, 2020 **Diocese of Helena UPDATE #8** is available on the parish website (blessedtrinitymissoula.org).

The prayer of Saint Paul in his letter to the Church at Ephesus, proclaimed this Ascension Sunday, is also written to us: *“May the eyes of your hearts be enlightened, that you may know what is the hope that belongs to his call...and what is the surpassing greatness of his power for us who believe.”*

Today, in the midst of all this. we still believe, hope, love, serve and give. These days have revealed our strong faith and the beauty and holiness of our prayer, which we have learned anew to “do” at home. On this Ascension Sunday the promise of Christ will echo through our worship space, our homes and our Church: *“Behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.”*

Blessings to you, abundant peace and good health.

Sincerely,



Fr. Ed Hislop



blessedtrinitymissoula.org