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July 9, 2020

Dear Parishioner
of Blessed Trinity + Spirit of Christ:

This Sunday (July 12) Saint Paul shares these words: *“Creation awaits with eager expectation...”*. So too do we wait and hope for better days with a longing that the challenges of Covid 19 will lead us to deeper care for our neighbors, family, friends, and fellow parishioners. We hope as well that these past months are leading us to stronger appreciation of our faith, Sunday Mass and our share in the body and blood of the risen Christ.

While our regularly scheduled weekend Masses have been “reinstated” since Pentecost (May 31), many of us understandably continue to feel uncomfortable gathering with others, especially those considered to be in the “high risk category.” What continues to be clear is that this “health crisis” is far from over and the continued spread of the virus demands caution and actions designed for our own protection and the protection of others.

The regularly scheduled weekend Masses at Blessed Trinity and Spirit of Christ will continue but with added caution and concern.

1. **Social distance protocols** at both churches will be maintained. Seating is arranged appropriately to accommodate that requirement.
2. The baptismal font continues to be “sealed” due to virus concerns.
3. “Fresh,” unused worship aids will continue to be provided for each Mass. They will be available at the entrances and will not be distributed by greeters.
4. Hand sanitization is of paramount importance. Stations are available at each entrance (please use BEFORE you pick up the worship aid).
5. The wearing of **FACIAL PROTECTIVE “MASKS”** and the use of hand sanitizer will be required of any person engaged in liturgical ministries (greeters, gift bearers, ministers of communion, etc.).
6. Missoula County has issued a community wide directive that face masks are required at public gatherings. This is an important and appropriate directive. **Therefore, face coverings are required for those who attend the liturgy or other events/meetings at both Blessed Trinity and Spirit of Christ. This is effective for all Masses and events beginning July 11.**
7. Prior to receiving Holy Communion all are asked to use a hand sanitizer available at communion stations (or use your own). NOTE: I will use a hand sanitizer just before distributing Holy Communion, and after distribution (if an additional minister is required that person will do the same).
8. Social gathering following Mass, sadly, will not occur. Social distancing must be maintained at all times.
9. We hope these revised “protocols” **and our shared commitment to follow them** will help create a sense of safety as we gather together for the Lord’s Supper.

10. **THE COLLECTION: Your Stewardship offering at the Lord's Table.**

The "basket" is not passed during Mass, nor are the Stewardship offerings presented at the Lord's Table due to the "virus" concerns. The baskets are in place at church entrances. You are invited to place your Sunday offering in the basket as you arrive at the Church.

YOUR REGULAR OFFERING CONTINUES TO BE OF PARAMOUNT IMPORTANCE. Our fiscal year ended on June 30 with a deficit at both parishes: Blessed Trinity \$13,797; Spirit of Christ \$10,486. So PLEASE, remember, if you are not present for the weekend liturgy, MAIL your weekly or monthly contribution. **If you have not contributed regularly during March, April, May or June, please try to "make up" your stewardship offering. THANK YOU.**

If this pandemic has caused you economic hardship, please let us know if we can assist you in any manner.

11. **Blessed Trinity Capital Campaign: HONOR THE PAST; SERVE THE PRESENT; PROVIDE FOR THE FUTURE. GOOD NEWS!** We have reached 69% of our campaign goal with 47% participation. If you have not yet stated your intention, please do so soon. Thank you.

OTHER CONCERNS

This pandemic has led us to implement significant and necessary protocols for the safety and protection of ourselves and others. Out of necessity, many aspects of our liturgy have been "minimized." While necessary, this "minimalization" is in sharp contrast to how our Sunday Eucharist should be and has been celebrated. So, we sadly (again) implement these directives while we lament the necessity of doing so. What must be clear is that these temporary "procedures" are never to

become the norm. We must always remember *the church gathers, gathers regularly to praise and thank God, to remember and make present God's great deeds, to offer common prayer, to realize and celebrate God's dominion of peace and justice. The action of the Christian gathering is the liturgy around the Lord's Table. There is no church without gathering. There is no worship without gathering.* Live streamed or televised "Mass" can never substitute for the gathering around the Lord's table. When this seems to be the only option for some of us, we should "watch" only with a deep lament and sadness that we cannot gather or eat *and* drink of the Lord's Supper. In these circumstances, which demand a more limited approach to our worship, we must act with a loud, heart-felt and strong lament—this is not how it should be; this is not how we can let it become.

Perhaps the experience of these past months and those weeks yet to come could be the seeds of which the Gospel speaks this Sunday. May the seeds we scatter these days fall on good ground and produce, in the end, a rich harvest of stronger full-bodied worship, genuine care and service of others and deeper dedication to our Sunday gathering around the Lord's Table. With all of creation we await, "with eager expectation..." and sing with the psalmist: *"The seed that falls on good ground will yield a fruitful harvest."*

LET THESE SUMMER DAYS "RE-CREATE" US ALL IN BODY, MIND AND SPIRIT.

Sincerely,



Fr. Ed Hislop



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