

## FR. MIKE'S OPEN LETTER TO PARISHIONERS

RE: COVID-19

March 19, 2020

Faith Family of OLMC.

Two weeks ago it was utterly unthinkable that our Church would suspend masses for any reason. Gathering for the Eucharist has always defined and sustained us as God's people. But, as you know, Covid-19 and its spread threaten our community, nation, and world in unprecedented ways. Consequently, it has been deemed necessary by the Diocesan authorities that the discontinuation of parish Masses and Religious Education programs be extended. Further, daily Masses and all liturgical gatherings of the Lenten season (Stations of the Cross, Reconciliation Service, et al.) are now included in the prohibition. Sadly, this abrogation extends now even to all ceremonies of Holy Week and Easter Sunday. We are on uncharted ground in this fight against the peril of this virus. Extreme measures in the short-term are necessary for a long-term beneficial outcome. I ask for your patience and understanding in this time of sacrifice.

This has not changed: We are God's own people called to accept His invitation to journey with Christ toward authentic life regardless of hurdles and challenges. We have a decision to make as our response to that calling. Let us decide not to give in to fear and hysteria. May we instead act prudently according to the directives of healthcare professionals and choose not to abdicate our responsibility to be people of hope and faith. Even though we must be apart for the next several weeks, it is more important than ever to continue the programs of the Lenten season: personal prayer, sacrifice, and service. In these ways we are together as a Catholic family and the local church of Our Lady of Mt Carmel. When we re-convene, we can come back stronger, more appreciative of the welcoming charism of our parish, and better able to recommit ourselves to building a culture of belonging. Let's not give in or waste this time. This cross, this time or trial, can be for us an opportunity.

We have been instructed to close the parish office. We apologize for any inconvenience this may cause. I'll miss you.

Trust in God,

Fr. Mike