

May 26, 2020

This afternoon I am meeting with any of our staff who choose to participate in a mask required, face to face meeting in the church seated in a manner comparable to what it might look like if or when we resume Sunday Liturgy but I am thinking that it might be more important to begin with a Mass for the Dead, something like All Souls Day or All Saints Day, rather than Sunday Mass and probably on a Saturday or a Sunday evening to avoid the hassle with the extensive construction going on in the neighborhood of the church.

The reason that Mass was discontinued in the first place was part of an effort to control the spread of the Covid 19 virus and save lives.

That worked in a manner of speaking and lives were saved but we must remember that not all lives were saved. In our country alone as of this weekend almost 100,000 lives have been lost to this disease and have no doubt we will be counting more as we move toward an unknown future.

As I write thousands of people are dying all over the world.

The sight of mass graves in Mexico and Latin America is something that should give us reason to pause and think, the knowledge that indigenous tribes in the Amazon rain forests who have survived thousands of years are being decimated by this virus and may be totally eradicated should be a cause for profound sadness and grief.

The thousands of people who have died alone in nursing homes, extended care centers, and hovels and hospitals and huts all over the world should not go unnoticed by those who survive.

I am thinking that our first liturgies should be liturgies of lamentation, not of celebration. I am thankful as I am sure you are that thus far almost all of us have been spared personal grief because of this plague but as humans in our gentler moments we all grieve and we all are sad.

The sadness and grief that have afflicted us must be acknowledged and given over to ritual. One of the most important dimensions of our parish life has been the development of our ministry to the dead and those who grieve them.

It is a collective ministry that we have all shared so that we have been able to welcome hundreds of families to bring their beloved dead to our church where we can help them acknowledge their sadness and grief and give it over to ritual. Our Bereavement Ministry would commonly spend far more time helping loved ones plan a funeral liturgy that the actual funeral liturgy would take.

I think we need to do that; we need to spend time giving the sadness and grief over to a liturgy of lamentation before we get back to celebration.

Later this week look for a letter from me in regular mail that will ask you if you want to come to Mass and abide by all conditions recommended by public health authorities and the diocese.

You will have several options to express your choice and a process of welcoming you to Mass will be explained in that letter and on our website and Face Book page but please, please remember that you should take care of yourself, you can pray and the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are not confined to any place much less a building as important as those buildings may be to us.

Staying away from Mass can be a very mature sign of solidarity and communion with our fellow human beings suffering and dead all over the world who have no choice but must live the moment alone.

And, if and when, we determine it is reasonably safe following and all protocols required, our first Masses will be Masses for the Dead and those who have cared for the dead and those who grieve the dead, all over the world.