



The Shell

An e-letter for

Saint James the Greater Church,
3565 Hubble Road
Cincinnati, Ohio 45247

April 27, 2020

Dear Friends,

For weeks now I have been standing at the altar in church staring at empty pews. Public Masses are suspended to protect the health of everybody. Nobody is there but me. At least, physically. In this different context, I have gotten a new sense of what it means when we say that at every Mass we are joined by the angels and saints and by the whole universal Church. I may be the only one physically present but that “cloud of witnesses” that Scripture talks about being in the presence of God is also there. I just can’t see them.

There is an awkwardness in this. I miss having all of you gathered around the altar. The belief that the Mass is a communal action, an action of all the people, isn’t felt when I am alone. Even if I was pretending to look at a congregation but was only being watched by a camera for streaming, it would be weird. {I can’t help but remember a teacher in the seminary telling us that, as we preside at Mass, we are not “playing to the crowd” as in theater. Now the caution would be not to “play to the camera.”} This points out how important it is for every Catholic to be at Mass on Sundays. We aren’t together for the social dimension of gathering, but because it is the way we express that we are Church. It is the epitome of who we are as Church when we gather for Mass. Not being together could lessen our sense that it is our religion, our faith that unites us. At the same time, it can heighten our awareness that is faith that unites us. Right now, being physically together isn’t a good idea. But being spiritually together need not be affected by our physical distance from one another. There is that “cloud of witnesses” always standing with us.

There have been some people, even a few bishops, who have said it is wrong for us to suspend public Masses any longer, arguing that the spiritual good outweighs the public health danger. This ignores the fact that someone going to church can carry the deadly virus back home to his/her family and everybody else the person is near. Our refraining from gathering for Mass is an act of charity. We deny ourselves so others can be safe. Russell Shaw is a Catholic writer who has worked as the communications director the Conference of Catholic Bishops and consults at the Vatican on communications issues. Just the other day he wrote, “The commandment to love one's neighbor as oneself has far more weight than any law, whether civil or canonical, or even the First Amendment. And if realistic love of neighbor requires keeping churches closed a while longer, then the churches should stay closed.” I think that is one of the

most concise statements about why public Masses are being celebrated. It hurts being away from the Eucharist, but our staying apart is an act of love.

Until we can safely gather together, stay well.

There is a new electronic bulletin on the parish website. Please check it out and continue to support our advertisers in the bulletin.

God bless and don't forget to pray the *Memorare* at Noon.

Father Nolker

Notices

Deaths

Joseph Pfiester, son of Mark and Marcia, brother of Jenna and Jordan
Died on April 19, 2020.

Phone Calls

We continue to have volunteers calling all our parishioners. Thank you to everybody who is doing this! It is one way we can connect with each other. It is an effort to make sure everybody is well.

If you don't get a call, it might be that you have changed your phone number from what is in our census data. Many people have dropped land lines and have not changed our information to a cell number. If that is the case, you may want to email us your new contact info.

The same might be true about email addresses. If you know somebody who didn't get this Shell, have them send us their current email.

End of School Year

The Governor has cancelled classroom instruction for the rest of this school year. Virtual learning continues. This has allowed us to adjust the St. James School calendar for the remaining weeks. The school year originally was to end on May 29. By moving days from March, April and May that were not instruction days (like Panther Prowl and teacher-in-service days) to the end of the year, we can now end school on May 22 and fulfill the required instructional time to meet state standards. No new assignments will be given to students after May 15. The last week will be used to complete assignments, return materials, and other end of the year necessities. Nothing definite has been decided about 8th grade graduation, but we are waiting for directions about what is possible.



Prayer to Mary

Pope Francis has urged everybody to pray the rosary each day in May. He has written two prayers, asking that we use one of them as we finish the rosary. They are reprinted at the end of this Shell.

Re-consecration of the United States to the Blessed Mother

Friday, May 1, 3:00 p.m.

During this time of great need, the bishops of the United States and Canada will renew the consecration of the two nations to the care of our Blessed Mother on Friday, May 1. The Most Reverend José H. Gomez, Archbishop of Los Angeles and the current president of the USCCB, will lead a brief liturgy with a prayer of [re-consecration to Mary, Mother of the Church](#) at 3:00 EDT that day. All members of the faithful may join in live via the USCCB's social media platforms: [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#).

The Prayers from Pope Francis

First Prayer

O Mary,
You shine continuously on our journey
as a sign of salvation and hope.
We entrust ourselves to you, Health of the Sick,
who, at the foot of the cross,
were united with Jesus' suffering,
and persevered in your faith.

"Protectress of the Roman people",
you know our needs,
and we know that you will provide,
so that, as at Cana in Galilee,
joy and celebration may return
after this time of trial.

Help us, Mother of Divine Love,
to conform ourselves to the will of the Father
and to do what Jesus tells us.
For he took upon himself our suffering,
and burdened himself with our sorrows
to bring us, through the cross,
to the joy of the Resurrection.
Amen.

*We fly to your protection,
O Holy Mother of God;
Do not despise our petitions
in our necessities,
but deliver us always
from every danger,
O Glorious and Blessed Virgin.*

Second Prayer

“We fly to your protection, O Holy Mother of God”.

In the present tragic situation, when the whole world is prey to suffering and anxiety, we fly to you, Mother of God and our Mother, and seek refuge under your protection.

Virgin Mary, turn your merciful eyes towards us amid this coronavirus pandemic. Comfort those who are distraught and mourn their loved ones who have died, and at times are buried in a way that grieves them deeply. Be close to those who are concerned for their loved ones who are sick and who, in order to prevent the spread of the disease, cannot be close to them. Fill with hope those who are troubled by the uncertainty of the future and the consequences for the economy and employment.

Mother of God and our Mother, pray for us to God, the Father of mercies, that this great suffering may end and that hope and peace may dawn anew. Plead with your divine Son, as you did at Cana, so that the families of the sick and the victims be comforted, and their hearts be opened to confidence and trust.

Protect those doctors, nurses, health workers and volunteers who are on the frontline of this emergency, and are risking their lives to save others. Support their heroic effort and grant them strength, generosity and continued health.

Be close to those who assist the sick night and day, and to priests who, in their pastoral concern and fidelity to the Gospel, are trying to help and support everyone.

Blessed Virgin, illumine the minds of men and women engaged in scientific research, that they may find effective solutions to overcome this virus.

Support national leaders, that with wisdom, solicitude and generosity they may come to the aid of those lacking the basic necessities of life and may devise social and economic solutions inspired by farsightedness and solidarity.

Mary Most Holy, stir our consciences, so that the enormous funds invested in developing and stockpiling arms will instead be spent on promoting effective research on how to prevent similar tragedies from occurring in the future.

Beloved Mother, help us realize that we are all members of one great family and to recognize the bond that unites us, so that, in a spirit of fraternity and solidarity, we can help to alleviate countless situations of poverty and need. Make us strong in faith, persevering in service, constant in prayer.

Mary, Consolation of the afflicted, embrace all your children in distress and pray that God will stretch out his all-powerful hand and free us from this terrible pandemic, so that life can serenely resume its normal course.

To you, who shine on our journey as a sign of salvation and hope, do we entrust ourselves, O Clement, O Loving, O Sweet Virgin Mary. Amen.