

FR. DITOMO'S FLOCKNOTE UPDATE, MARCH 22, 2020

First of all, please accept my apology for the delay in getting this communication out to you. Oddly enough, the last few days have been very busy for me (we had two funeral Masses in two days and I have been trying to record and transmit a lot of liturgies and devotions, etc, and have also been trying to still hear confessions and answer emergency needs).

Bishop Malloy issued a letter to the priests on March 20th. I will attach that letter to this email and post both this communication and his letter on the St. Gall website. Here are the basics for St. Gall:

- 1. WEDDINGS, BAPTISM, FUNERALS:** Following the calls of health authorities to limit all gatherings to ten persons, weddings, BAPTISMS, and FUNERALS may only be celebrated with a strict limit of ten persons maximum. We have no weddings scheduled until the Fall (and hopefully, by then, we are largely past this). However, as of now, funerals and baptisms will be celebrated. I know how difficult it will be to accept smaller gatherings for these important moments. However, I must and will obey our Bishop's decree. Please do not ask me to make exceptions. I cannot. I am willing to video these ceremonies and make them available for family and friends to view remotely. I will also be happy to offer a memorial Mass with a large group present at a later time when that is permissible. While families understandably want to have large celebrations for baptisms I do not recommend rescheduling baptisms for the distant future. Because of the importance of baptism it should not be deferred for a long time. It is better to have your child baptized with a small group than to defer baptism to a date in the undetermined future.
- 2. PRAYER IN CHURCH AND CONFESSION:** Bishop has said that pastors, at their discretion, may leave their churches open for private prayer as long as they observe the strict limit of 10 persons maximum (and the recommended "social distancing" of at least 6 feet). Interestingly, Bishop released his letter on March 20th just before Governor Pritzker announced the stay in place shelter protocol which then went into effect yesterday evening. As a result, while Bishop has said that we can allow people to pray in the church if under 10 people, the state of Illinois seems to presume that everyone should be staying at home unless they go out for specific reasons (things like: going to purchase food or medicine, going to work in essential industries, going for a walk outside, etc.). Of course, I believe that going to church to pray is an important thing. However, I am just trying to balance the needs of the faithful with state regulations at this time. My current plan is to create a schedule where I will be at the church (probably outside) so as to be available to hear **confessions** at a proper distance. I will also allow individuals to go into the church to pray if they wish at that time. See below for that schedule. **WE WILL DISCONTINUE OUR WEEKLY THURSDAY OF EUCHARISTIC ADORATION UNTIL A DATE TO BE DETERMINED LATER.**
- 3. NO DISTRIBUTION OF HOLY COMMUNION OR CONFERRAL OF THE ANOINTING OF THE SICK UNLESS IN EMERGENCY SITUATIONS:** Bishop specifically states that the distribution of Holy Communion and the administration of the sacrament of the sick (anointing of the sick) should be for EMERGENCY situations only. As I understand it, an emergency situation means that a person is near death. We are not permitted to distribute Holy Communion to people in cars or other options that some have proposed. This means that all homebound ministry is also temporarily suspended (if a homebound person is in emergency need of sacraments, they can call me directly). The faithful are encouraged to try to watch Masses on TV or the internet or listen to it via radio or the internet and also to make acts of spiritual communion. Bishop's letter makes no mention of the sacrament of confession. In my

opinion, confession is unique among the sacraments at this time. A person who falls into sin can find themselves in an urgent need of experiencing the grace of reconciliation. To that end, I will be making myself available at the church or outside the church at certain scheduled times (see below at the end of this letter for times). Some may not feel able to venture out for confession. Please know, therefore, that making a perfect act of contrition and then resolving to go to confession when at the next possible opportunity also opens one's self to God's mercy and grace. Prayers for an act of spiritual communion and an act of contrition will be available on the stgall.com homepage. I want to make it clear to everyone that my first priority in this time is to be able to hear the confessions and give the sacrament of anointing to those who are critically sick or near death. PLEASE CALL MY CELL (630-485-1443) IMMEDIATELY if someone is in this kind of emergency need for the sacraments.

4. **STILL NO PUBLIC MASSES:** As previously noted, there are to be no public Masses on weekdays or Sundays until further notice. While priests are encouraged to celebrate private Mass daily, these celebrations are to be done without the presence of the faithful. We are not to gather an informal group for a private Mass (otherwise, we would have to choose some and neglect most others). As I am recording and live streaming my Masses you will see that Rockford Diocese seminarian Jeff Fillipski is assisting at Mass. Jeff is staying at the St. Gall rectory (since Mundelein Seminary campus has been shut down) while he continues his studies online.
5. **NO PUBLIC LITURGIES DURING HOLY WEEK:** It is with great sadness that I announce that there will be no public liturgical celebrations during all of Holy Week including up through Easter Sunday. I will offer Mass at St. Gall for Palm Sunday and Holy Thursday evening Mass of the Lord's Supper (along with each day of Holy Week). I will lead the Good Friday Commemoration of the Lord's Passion. I will celebrate the Easter Vigil Mass and Easter Sunday Mass. I intend to broadcast these celebrations live via Facebook (St. Gall Catholic Church Elburn, IL - @stgallelburn). I post all live videos to the Facebook page immediately so they can be viewed later. I will also video record these celebrations and upload them to YouTube (as I know that a lot of people do not use Facebook). This is not the St. Gall YouTube page but my own personal YouTube page (Christopher DiTomo). At this time, I am not able to broadcast live via YouTube, so there will have to be a time delay in when those videos are available online. Currently, I am celebrating Masses in the rectory chapel rather than our church because the rectory chapel makes for more optimal video/audio recording (less echo, etc.). However, the Holy See's Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments has mandated that Holy Week liturgies take place only in parish churches and not in rectory chapels. So, I will do the best that I can to celebrate these liturgies and allow them to be recorded and streamed. I am trying to develop the technical capacity to make the liturgy available remotely to as many people as I can in the best way. Bishop Malloy will also be broadcasting his liturgies for Holy Week at the Cathedral. I will post those times again as we get closer to Holy Week. This is going to be a very strange Holy Week for all of us. In some ways, we will naturally feel sad. However, if we surrender our will to our situation as it is, not fight it with sadness or anger, and just try to pray deeply in the midst of it, God can and will shower us with His grace!
6. **THE OFFICE WILL BE CLOSED:** Please note that our parish office will be closed during this time. We will still be checking emails and voice mails. Some staff are working from home. If you are in need of something, call the office and leave a message (I will check the office a couple times a day). Or, call or email me directly (630-485-1443). I am getting a lot of emails, calls, and texts these days so I appreciate your patience as I try to get back to everyone.

7. **COMMUNICATIONS:** I will make the home page of St. Gall's website the main information center in this time. Go to www.stgall.com for all important updates. It will be difficult to communicate with our parishioners who do not use the internet at this time. Unfortunately, it is simply not feasible to communicate everything by mail or phone calls at this time. If you know a parishioner who does not use the internet perhaps you can call them up and make sure that they are caught up. I will try to make some phone calls to parishioners this week. We currently plan to still publish a weekly bulletin with important and encouraging information and the bulletin will be available in its normal place on the website (look at the NEWS section). As I have said, we appreciate your efforts to continue to give to St. Gall during this time (envelopes can be mailed to St. Gall or dropped off in the black mailbox right by the parish office door; the GivePlus mobile app is also a great way to give online). Even though you are kept from communal worship and reception of Holy Communion, St. Gall is still here and we are still carrying out our mission to form disciples of Jesus Christ and we want to be strong when this virus passes.

ST. GALL SCHEDULE

People really appreciate consistency. I have been trying to figure how best to schedule things so as to meet the needs of our people at this time. So, I am going to make some changes (so please discontinue other previously announced scheduled—Mass at 2pm, etc). Here is what I am setting up:

Fr. DiTomo will be at St. Gall Catholic Church (possibly outside, weather permitting) to hear confessions and open up the church for an individual to come in and pray at the following times:

- Please keep in mind, there is currently a “shelter in place” order from the state of Illinois. I, personally, think that we should do our part to try to stay home and reduce the spread of this virus. However, if someone has an urgent need for confession, I will be around to help. If it helps to pop into the church to prayer, I will allow that. I do not know if public authorities will take any measures to enforce the shelter in place ordinance. I will continue to try to balance the spiritual needs of the people of St. Gall while also respecting our civil authorities.

SUNDAY -A pre-recorded Sunday Mass will be available on my personal YouTube page (search YouTube for “Christopher DiTomo”) starting late Saturday evening. You will be able to find this video on the St. Gall website home page (www.stgall.com). It will be in two videos (part one - liturgy of the Word, part two - liturgy of the Eucharist) -10:30am Mass will be live-streamed on Facebook (St. Gall Catholic Church Elburn, IL page). -2-3pm Father DiTomo at St. Gall Church (or in parking lot) available for confessions, will allow individuals into the church to pray (no more than 10 people at any one time)

MONDAY-SATURDAY -9am Mass will be live-streamed on St. Gall Facebook page. -By noon, the video of this Mass will be posted to my YouTube page (please subscribe to that page) -2-3pm Father DiTomo at St. Gall Church (or in parking lot) available for confessions, will allow individuals into the church to pray (no more than 10 people at any one time) -5-6pm Father DiTomo at St. Gall Church (or in parking lot) available for confessions, will allow individuals into the church to pray (no more than 10 people at any one time) -If you need another time to come in for confession or to pray in church then simply contact me by email (frditomo@stgall.com or phone/text 630-485-1443)

I SHOULD be able to keep this schedule, it might need to change if certain events come up (like a funeral). In that event, I will update the St. Gall website home page.

I will also be creating videos on prayer and special devotions and Bible studies (including Stations of the Cross on Fridays). Our staff will be creating content to help you pass the time while staying rooted in your faith.

Let us continue to lift each other up in prayer!

REJOICE! Our God is a God of providence, He has a plan and He is in charge and Christ the King reigns! Fr. DiTomo