Dear St. Colman Parishioners,

We are slowly seeking to reopen and things are going to be significantly different from what we were doing before the Coronavirus showed up in our world. This, of course, is true not only of the Church but of everywhere in our lives.

In this letter I want to outline for you some of the changes.

**Open Church**
Beginning this week and next, the Church will be open for prayer (ramp door only) on Tuesdays from 10:00am – 4:00pm and on Thursdays from 6:00am - Noon. Please only sit in the designated areas in the front of the church as this will help those who are cleaning and sanitizing the church each day. Dave and Paul have roped off the back of church to make it more visible where you should sit. Also during this time, the restrooms will not be accessible and the Parish Hall remains closed. This schedule will be in effect until the first of June. Any schedule changes will be announced in the bulletin.

**Confessions**
Confessions will continue to be heard in the garage bay until June 2. Continue making appointments by calling Tina Garland at 937.728.1818. At this time, confessions are scheduled to move to the Cry Room (without appointments) on Tuesday, June 2 from 4:30 – 5:00pm when we resume our normal schedule for confessions on Tuesdays and Saturdays. Again, watch the bulletin for confirmation of this schedule after June 2.

**Public Masses**
Masses will resume in a very modified way beginning Saturday, May 30, 5:00 p.m. and Sunday, May 31 at 11:00am (note the Sunday time change). These will be the new times for weekend Masses for the next few months. Daily Masses will resume normal schedule June 1: Mondays at 8:30am, Tuesdays at 5:30pm and Thursdays at 8:30am.

We will continue to livestream Sunday Masses on our YouTube channel, “St. Colman of Cloyne Streaming”. You can find that link on our website, www.stcolmanwch.com. We will continue to livestream because, as you will read in the Bishop’s letter, the opening of Masses in no way makes a claim that our services are safe. *If you are in the at-risk category or are uncomfortable with the risk, or are showing any possible symptoms, you should stay home and watch the Mass. There is no obligation to attend Mass at a minimum through September 16.*

We want to emphasize this strongly for two reasons: 1) We don’t want people needlessly putting themselves at risk; 2) We are going to be very limited in the number of people who can attend Mass. In order to be compliant with the safe distancing guidelines of the state and the diocese, we can only use every other pew. Within that pew, persons who don’t live in the same household must be spaced at least six feet apart. This means that we will be using only 1/3 of our pews with many of these only be able to accommodate two to four people.
Because of this we encourage you to consider coming to a weekday Mass instead of a weekend Mass if that is possible for you. On the weekend, once the available spots in the pews have been taken, no one else will be allowed in the Mass. If attendance is full the first couple of weekends, we are hoping to have a live-stream in the parish hall for overflow seating.

What will the Mass look like when we return?
The ushers will prop the doors open before Mass so people are not continually touching the handles and knobs. Hand sanitizer will be available at all doors and is encouraged to be used. Holy Water will not be in the fonts. Masks will be required to be worn by everyone except for the Mass celebrant during the time of the Mass (and the lector when they are reading). If you forget your mask, the ushers will give you one and require you to put it on before coming into the church (except for little children – the diocesan guideline said for those 2 or younger). The restrooms will remain closed both in the church and in the Parish Hall.

All hymnals and missalettes have been removed from the churches to remove the risk of contagion. You might consider bringing your phone with an app like “Magnificat” or others that have the readings, or a daily devotional that has the readings. The Magnificat is currently offering free subscriptions at https://us.magnificat.net/. The pews and everything that people touch must be cleaned and sanitized between Masses.

The priest will process in and out from the sacristy rather than from the back of the church. The Cantor will sing the introit verse as he comes out. There will be no scheduled altar servers or Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion. There will be only one lector scheduled at each Mass to remove the possibility of multiple persons touching the ambo and lectionary. There will be no offertory collection or procession of the gifts. Instead there will be baskets placed at the entrances of the church for you to make your offering as you leave. The priest will already have the wine and hosts at the altar. There will be no sign of peace and the chalice will not be offered.

At Communion you will be asked to keep the social distance requirement of six feet in a single file line. There will be “X”s on the floor of the center aisle to indicate where you stand before moving forward. Ushers will dismiss you by row. You will remove your mask shortly before Communion, and then put it back on after receiving Communion. Receiving in the hand is strongly encouraged by the Bishops during this time. During Communion, the communion antiphon will most likely be sung and/or some instrumental music played. Mass will end with the singing of a couple of verses of a familiar hymn as the priest processes back into the sacristy.

Ushers will dismiss the congregation by rows beginning from the back of the church once Mass has ended. Socialization after Mass should not occur within the church and everyone should respect proper social distancing outside of the church. There will be no coffee and donuts or other receptions for the foreseeable future.

Bulletins should still be accessed electronically as they will not be printed and distributed. Those receiving their bulletins by mail will still continue to do so. If you do not have internet, we can mail a bulletin to you each week. Contact Tina in the Parish Office to get on the mailing list for those.
**Seating will be very different.** To maintain the six feet social distancing requirement, we can only use every other pew. We only have 53 seats available for each Mass. With that said…

In these first few weeks, we are asking that you “reserve” a seat to attend the weekend Masses using Eventbrite. [https://www.eventbrite.com/o/st-colman-catholic-church-30331430102](https://www.eventbrite.com/o/st-colman-catholic-church-30331430102)

Each member of your family will need to reserve a seat; however, to make it a bit easier, you can reserve two seats at a time. This will enable us to better plan for the capacity at each Mass and will indicate what the interest is for our parishioners to return to Mass. More importantly, it will prevent you from driving to the church only to find there are no seats available and have to be turned away. It is also important to note that you are welcome to drive in and see if any seats are available if you have not reserved a seat beforehand. If there are seats still open, you will certainly be able to attend Mass. Seats for daily Masses will not need to be reserved at this point unless we find we are at capacity for those as well. And most importantly, you will need to reserve seats before each weekend Mass each week while we use this system.

Those of you who do not have internet access or are not comfortable using Eventbrite, you are welcome to call Tina in the office to reserve your seats. She can enter your reservation in the system for you. Keep in mind that the Parish Office is still closed, so you may have to leave a message. She is checking voice mail three times a week and will confirm with you if she was able to reserve a seat for you. Calling earlier in the week will be better than later in the week.

You will find “seats” marked with blue tape on the pews at least six feet from any other parishioner not of your household. They are marked in pairs. Obviously a couple may sit together. Two single people may sit together if both agree and you arrive together. Families may sit together, however, you also need to come in together.

When a family takes up more space than the pair of marked seats, the next available rows of seats in front of and behind the family are no longer available as the 6ft social distance requirement cannot be met. Ushers will manage the seating and will be on the lookout for parties of three or more. Families also have the option of not sitting together and only using the designated seats.

It should also be noted that we will not be able to provide the “handicapped seating” in the front pews and the cushions had to be removed. If you are unable to walk to Communion, alert an Usher who will make sure Father walks back to give you communion.

**Live Stream**

Because we will be able to only accommodate about a fraction of our usual capacity and because many will continue to decide to stay at home for a time, we will continue to livestream the Sunday morning Mass on our YouTube channel at [https://www.youtube.com/c/stcolmanofcloynestreaming](https://www.youtube.com/c/stcolmanofcloynestreaming). You can also access the link from the front page of the parish website, [www.stcolmanwch.org](http://www.stcolmanwch.org).
**Holy Communion for those at Home**

If you are already on our Homebound list, you will be called in the coming weeks to inquire whether you would like to have one of our Homebound Ministers start bringing you Communion again. Due to the nature of healthcare facilities and nursing homes, Communion still will not be allowed to be brought to these places at this time.

If you have a family member attending Mass and would like for that family member to be delegated to bring Communion home to you, arrangements can be made with Fr. Tim. There is a bit of instruction and training involved beforehand.

**Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament**

Father Tim will resume Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament on June 2 from 4:00 – 5:00pm. At this time, we will continue to hold Adoration the first Tuesday of the month. This may change once Fr. Haddad arrives mid-July. Watch the bulletin for more information.

**Office**

We will continue *not* to keep regular office hours. Call the Parish Office if you need to speak with Tina or Stephanie. You can arrange to speak by phone or when necessary, schedule a time to come in and meet personally. Stephanie’s last day on the parish staff is June 15. After that, Tina will be managing those duties until Fr. Haddad fills the position.

**Transition**

Some have been asking about the transition of pastors and a farewell for Stephanie. It is not likely that we will be able to hold any kind of large parish picnic farewell or hello to Fr. Haddad. Although there is always a glimmer of hope something will change, at this point the idea of larger public gatherings of a traditional sort is just not likely. So we may need to find creative ways to say our good-byes and hellos.

**Final Thoughts**

So that is where we stand at this point. This is a very fluid thing, so depending on how things unfold locally with these changes, at the level of the diocese, and within the State of Ohio Health Guidelines, all of this is subject to change. The bottom line is this, it is one step back towards normalcy but certainly we are not there. Although we will now be able to publicly celebrate the sacraments, it is thought that normal parish life will not return until sometime in 2021.

It bears repeating… *If you are in the at-risk category or are uncomfortable with the risk, or are showing any possible symptoms, you should stay home and watch the Mass. There is no obligation to attend Mass at a minimum through September 16.* You are not required to attend Mass because we are opening the church up and resuming a Mass schedule. Those of you who are in the high-risk categories are not expected to be in attendance. Please feel free to stay home and watch the live-stream Masses. Consider attending a daily Mass instead of the weekend Mass. Because of the dispensation, there is no sin in that.

In the meantime, let us keep finding ways to live our Faith to the fullest during this unique period of time. Keep checking on those who are more at risk. Keep praying for an end to the threat of the coronavirus. God bless you for your constancy and faithfulness during this time!
In Christ,

Fr. Hahn

Fr. Tim

PS: Please refer to the website and the bulletin for any changes week to week. While we will not continue to send a mailing when things change, we will keep schedules and procedures up to date on the website and include notifications in the weekly bulletins.