

24 March 2020

First, a few things you should know.

- Bishop Bergie is asking all Catholics to pray the Rosary at noon tomorrow (March 25) to honor Jesus and Mary on the Solemnity of the Annunciation.
- The Day of Reconciliation, where a Priest would be available to hear Confessions from 10:00 AM until 2:00 PM in every Parish in the Diocese, which was scheduled for Saturday, March 28, 2020 has been cancelled. There will be Confessions at Holy Rosary Parish between 3:30 and 4:00 PM on that day (as usual) in the Church.
- A number of people have been calling the Parish Office to inquire about the status of Funerals and Weddings at Holy Rosary Parish. All Holy Rosary Parish Funerals will take place at the Funeral Home. The Funeral Outside of Mass Liturgy will be used in all cases. No Funeral Masses will take place in the Funeral Home. As of this moment, the maximum number of people allowed at a Funeral is fifty. This means only immediate family can attend the Liturgy (parents, children, siblings etc.). Proper social distancing (six feet between each person) will be enforced (this includes interrupting the Funeral if the rule is not followed). The safety of the Pastoral Staff, Funeral Home staff and those attending the liturgy must be protected. Any questions or concerns about these matter should be directed to the Pastor.
- The earliest scheduled Wedding at Holy Rosary is not until after Easter. Although no public liturgies (including weddings) will be permitted by the Diocese until April 18, it is quite possible they may not resume at that time. I would advise all couples expecting to get married at Holy Rosary Parish before September 2020 to be prepared for the possibility their celebration will be postponed. This would include contacting with Banquet Halls, florists photographers etc. about alternate arrangements. All weddings scheduled for Holy Rosary in 2020 will take place but I cannot guarantee when that will be. As soon as things return to normal please contact the Parish Office so we can work out the details about your upcoming Wedding. I will be posting updates on this website about what is happening at Holy Rosary Parish on a regular basis. Please check it periodically so you will have accurate information about these issues.

Rules are necessary to keep order in society. Traffic laws regulate how fast one can drive on a street, who has the right of way at an intersection and when a driver must stop at a traffic light. The Church has rules about what constitutes a valid Baptism, how Mass is to be celebrated and when one must fast or abstain from meat. Before any rule is established, careful thought is given to determine whether it fulfils the reason for its existence.

In today's Gospel, Jesus heals a man who had been ill for thirty-eight years on a Sabbath. As is clear from the story, the illness had caused the man great distress and each time he tried to gain relief from it, he was thwarted. When told by Jesus to stand up, take up your mat and walk, the man complied. A short time later, he was confronted by the Pharisees and informed that what he was doing was against the Jewish Law. When Jesus gave the command to the man, he likely knew it would be viewed by the Pharisees as unlawful. Yet, if the purpose of the rules about the Sabbath was get people to offer to God some of their most valuable resource (time), what was the man doing wrong? Perhaps it was because Christ was challenging not a rule but a whole way of looking all rules that the Pharisees started persecuting him. Jesus had shown how the rule had become disconnected from the reason for its existence.

During the Covid-19 crisis Bishop Bergie has released all Catholics from the obligation of attending Sunday Mass. The purpose of the commandment to "keep the Sabbath holy" is to honour God and not spread disease. Yet, this change does not eliminate other dimensions of

the commandment. Catholics should not allow Sunday to become like any other day of the week throughout this crisis. They should take the same hour they spent at Mass on Sunday and fill it with other spiritual activities. Before the virus outbreak, people kept telling me how they had no time to pray. Now that they have more time on their hands, they should put it to good use. Dig out your Rosary from the bottom of the drawer of your night table and use it. Read the Scripture texts for the Sunday Mass and reflect on what they mean for your life. Another possibility is to read the chapters of one of the Gospels (this year we have been reading Matthew) consecutively every day or each Sunday. Find your old prayer book, maybe it's the one you got for Confirmation, and relearn the prayers you use to know. These days, we need all the help we can get and maybe a little divine assistance prompted by our prayers, might do the trick.

As Jesus showed us in today's Gospel, if rules are disconnected from the reason for their existence, they don't make sense. Otherwise, they should be observed. When circumstances change, it isn't the purpose of the rule which changes, but whether the rule still achieves that purpose. We have the ability to figure whether this true. We need to use it.