



# Saint Philomena Parish

1790 SOUTH 222ND • DES MOINES, WASHINGTON 98198 • (206) 878-8709

March 12, 2020

My dear friends,

We find ourselves as a community and as a Church in unknown territory. As Governor Inslee observed, the last time there was this kind of widespread risk of pestilence, it was during the Spanish flu epidemic of 1917. He has advised us that the risk of morbidity and mortality in this pandemic is far worse than even a hundred years ago. This is serious business.

On March 11, 2020, Archbishop Etienne took the unprecedented and surely reluctant step of suspending public masses until further notice. I recognize that this will pose many questions for many people, but be assured that the step was taken out of an abundance of caution and care for the health of God's people.

We will be maintaining regular office hours, and I will be available for visits to the sick. The Blessed Sacrament chapel will remain open for us, under certain conditions. These are, that there be no more than **six** people allowed in there at any one time.

I will be hearing confessions on Saturday morning, March 14<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> from 9:00am to 10:00am. The Church will be open for prayer at that time, again with the proviso that the worshippers keep a good distance from each other, and practice sensible precautions of washing hands etc. The point of these exercises is to protect us all from infection, not to vex nor inconvenience anyone. Following class on March 16, Religious Education classes at all levels will be suspended at least until the governor allows schools to re-open.

Dr. Stephen Morissette will communicate with the school parents on what the safety protocols will be through the media of emails and the Facebook page.

Our response to this crisis will necessarily be incomplete and imperfect. But, as Leonard Bernstein's *Candide* sings in the finale, "We'll do the best we know". Of course, you are all near my heart, in my prayers and masses. Our Lady, Help of the Sick, pray for us.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

*Father Steve*

Rev. Stephen Woodland

PS These measures will involve the parish in financial hardship. Like most of our families, we live from paycheck to paycheck, or rather from collection to collection. As your circumstances allow, please continue to support the parish. You may mail or drop off your offering at the parish office during office hours. We thank you so much.