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## Public Masses Suspended

Dear Friends in Christ,

I wish I were writing with good news. Unfortunately, I am writing to inform you that public Masses have been suspended in the Diocese of Arlington. As you know, many other dioceses had already made this decision, while Bishop Burbidge refrained to do so. We at Saint James had tried to find a way to offer Masses while also addressing concerns about Coronavirus.

Unfortunately, Governor Northam's ban on gatherings of 100+ people...the CDC's advice against 50+ gatherings...and the President's caution against 10+ gatherings all indicated where this was heading. For reasons of public health, Bishop Burbidge has decided to suspend all public Masses. It was not a decision he came to easily or without regret. I encourage you to watch his announcement on the Diocesan [website](#).

Since the Bishop's decision is effective immediately, there will be no Masses tomorrow, March 17th. In addition, I am cancelling all parish activities as well. But let me explain what we *will* continue.

- **Masses.** The Bishop's decision to suspend public Masses does not mean that Masses won't be offered. In our rectory chapel, the priests of Saint James will continue to offer the Masses that so many of you have requested and that are listed in our bulletin. We live-streamed our Masses last Sunday, and that met with a good response. I will make similar arrangements moving forward. Please be patient. It might take a day or two to make the necessary arrangements.
- **Prayer.** The church is not closed. We will leave the church open for you to come and spend time -- *please* -- before our Eucharistic Lord. I hope to arrange for Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and Eucharistic Adoration. We simply need to be prudent in observing the guidelines regarding public gatherings.
- **Confessions.** The "new normal" presents challenges in our hearing confessions. Some have also raised concerns about the close quarters in the confessional. Nevertheless, we plan to keep -- even increase -- our confessional schedule. I will inform you once we have made new arrangements in this regard.

- **Digital Diego.** The Parish of Saint James (aka, *Diego...get it?*) will be going more digital. That is, we hope to provide more resources to you via Facebook, our website, and this medium. Please stay tuned for more information.
- **Fish Fry Cod-Thru.** Although gathering in restaurants is now discouraged, *drive thrus* are not! So, we will move ahead with our Fish Fry Cod-Thru, starting Friday at 5PM.

Two final thoughts for today...

*First, Omnia in bonum.... We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him (Rom 8:28).* We never know the fullness of why God allows certain things -- in this case the Coronavirus and the consequent restrictions on our worship. But we do know that He works for good in everything. There is no situation beyond His power to redeem and make an instrument for good in our lives. One good we can draw from our current painful situation is a deeper desire for the Eucharist. We are entering into an unexpected Advent, a time of waiting for His return...and preparing for that return. This is a longing for us priests as well, because we desire to offer Mass not alone but with you, our parish family. So, let's make the most of this time by deepening our longing and desire for Holy Communion. May the deprivation we now feel lead to a greater love and desire for Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. May each day without Holy Communion lead to a more devout reception when Mass is restored.

*Second, the devil.* I hope it does not sound overwrought to suggest that our current situation is of the devil. Yes, in a broad sense, all evil in the world is related to old scratch. But this case in particular has his hoof prints all over it: division, tension, anxiety, and most of all separation from the Lord. We should pray that the devil's work in this situation be undone and he be put to flight. In that vein, please see below the *Breastplate of Saint Patrick* -- a powerful prayer for protection against demonic assaults. As tomorrow is Patrick's feast, let's join him in this prayer.

Through the intercession of our Lady and Saint James, may the Lord keep you healthy and bless you always.

Sincerely in Christ,

Fr. Scalia

### **The Breastplate of Saint Patrick**

I bind to myself today  
 The strong power of an invocation of the Trinity,  
 The faith of the Trinity in Unity  
 The Creator of the Universe.

I bind to myself today

The might of the Incarnation of Christ  
with that of His Baptism,  
The might of His Crucifixion with that of His Burial,  
The might of His Resurrection with that of His Ascension.  
The might of His Coming on the Judgment Day.

I bind to myself today  
The power in the love of the Seraphim,  
In the obedience of the Angels,  
In the ministrations of the Archangels,  
In the hope of Resurrection unto reward,  
In the prayers of the Patriarchs,  
In the predictions of the Prophets,  
In the preaching of the Apostles,  
In the faith of the Confessors,  
In the purity of the holy Virgins,  
In the deeds of righteous men.

I bind to myself today  
The power of Heaven,  
The brightness of the Sun,  
The whiteness of Snow,  
The splendor of Fire,  
The speed of Lightning,  
The swiftness of the Wind,  
The depth of the Sea,  
The stability of the Earth,  
The firmness of Rocks.

I bind to myself today  
God's Power to pilot me,  
God's Might to uphold me,  
God's Wisdom to guide me,  
God's Eye to look before me,  
God's Ear to hear me,  
God's Word to speak for me,  
God's Hand to guard me,  
God's Way to lie before me,  
God's Shield to shelter me,  
God's Host to secure me.  
Against the snares of demons,  
Against the seductions of vices,  
Against the lusts of nature,  
Against everyone who meditates injury to me,  
Whether far or near,  
Whether few or with many.

I invoke today all these virtues  
Against every hostile merciless power  
Which may assail my body and my soul.  
Against the incantations of false prophets,

Against the black laws of heathenism,  
Against the false laws of heresy,  
Against the deceits of idolatry,  
Against the spells of women, and smiths and Druids,  
Against every knowledge that blinds the soul of man.

Christ protect me today  
Against poison, against burning,  
Against drowning, against wounding,  
That I may receive abundant reward.

Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me,  
Christ in me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me,  
Christ at my right, Christ at my left,  
Christ when lying down, Christ in sitting,  
Christ in rising up.

Christ in the heart of every man who thinks of me,  
Christ in the mouth of every man who speaks of me,  
Christ in every eye that sees me,  
Christ in every ear that hears me.

I bind to myself today  
The strong power of an invocation of the Trinity,  
The faith of the Trinity in Unity  
The Creator of the Universe.

Salvation is of the Lord,  
Salvation is of the Lord,  
Salvation is of Christ;  
May Your salvation, O Lord, be with  
us forever.

St. James Parish, 905 Park Avenue, Falls Church, VA 22046

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