

Dear St. Columbkille Family,

We find in the ancient civilizations and ancient culture of the old testament that hospitality was a moral rule; not to welcome a pilgrim was a death sentence. We now ask ourselves how to practice hospitality in our modern society with all its implications and characteristics. This personal moral rule in ancient societies have been assimilated by governments and nonprofit organizations that have created shelters for the homeless in many cities. In most cases these institutions are running thanks to volunteers who offer their time and talents to help and bring comfort to the less fortunate.

This Sunday readings offer an additional point of view regarding hospitality receiving “a man of God” (2Kings 4: 8-16) or “a prophet” (Matthew 10: 37-42). We find in both biblical references a clear invitation to understand hospitality as welcoming the word of God, the voice of God, the message of God. There is a tendency among some believers to practice religion but not to stay open to the signs of God’s love. This tendency represents one of the most dangerous signs of anti-testimony of Christianity. The excessive focus on a mystery, rituals, sacramentals, and even superstitions disconnect our lives to the essence of our faith in a living God.

One of my biggest sadness as a priest is to deal with a catholic formality from entire families who do not show any commitment to their parish, do not participate in any community activities, come to mass just few times a year and in doing so, show no interest in receiving the Holy Communion. Another evident contradiction is found in our religious education where children are brought to receive preparation for their First Communion, when parents do not receive it, and after children receive their First Communion many don’t come back to church. A child growing in such a so called “catholic” family will easily lose all kind of motivation to welcome the word of God in their conscience.

There are many who expect the institutional church to be available 24/7 to respond to their needs, ignoring that the church is basically, the community of believers united in prayer and solidarity, and that is how the church has survived for twenty centuries responding to the needs of times. But, how can we become a welcoming community, a welcoming church showing hospitality to lost souls if we do not welcome the Word of God, the blessing of God, the message of God revealed by the Bible and preached by their ministers?

We should consider going back to the ancient practices of hospitality and not depending exclusively on the government or organizations to welcome the unfortunate and treat them with dignity. Likewise, we should go back and learn from ancient Christian communities how to welcome the word of God in our families, the domestic church and not depending exclusively on the institutional church. We must remember that in practicing our catholic faith we are not pleasing any human being. Our practicing of faith is a projection of our soul that recognizes the need of God’s Grace and Blessing, it is an expression of hospitality to the Word of God.

I want to congratulate many families I have the privilege to know, who have persevered many difficult times and still remain faithful to God and practice their faith. I also wish to encourage,

for the Love of God, those families that remain distant from church to not be afraid to open their hearts and show hospitality to God and rediscover the beauty of Christian community.

During this Pandemic it is more important than ever to welcome God in our lives and ask him to accompany us, and we the St. Columbkille Community want to be a visible sign of Hope and Faith.

I wish to share with you that the **Bishop has extended the dispensation from obligation to attend Sunday Mass until September 1st, 2020**. At that time, it will be reevaluated by the Bishop and the Presbyteral Council.

We, at St. Columbkille will continue offering weekday mass from Monday to Friday at 8:00am; Saturdays 3:00pm & 5:00pm and Sundays 9:00am, 11:00am and 5:30pm. (Sunday 7:00am will be discontinued beginning Sunday, July 5th)

Our Church capacity is 1,200 seats. Since we re-opened for weekends, we have no more than 500 in the total of 6 masses. The most crowded masses are Saturday 3pm and Sunday 9am with no more than 120 participants, that means 10% of our capacity.

The attendance at other masses are around 6% and 8 % of our capacity. If you attend Saturday 5pm, Sunday 11am or 5:30pm there are many open areas in church.

We will continue giving **Communion under the Portico on Sunday from 12noon to 12:30pm** for those who watch the mass on TV (Our diocesan Mass is on Sunday 10:30am on local Fox 4) There is no need to exit your car in the driveway of the Church.

On Saturdays, we offer a **Communal Rosary and Mariam Novena** beginning at 8:00am and the **Sacrament of Reconciliation under the Portico** (Driveway without exit your car) from 8:30am to 9:30am.

When you come to church you must remember to bring your face mask and keep it for respect to others; practice the social distancing when you find a seat and at the moment to receive Holy Communion; use hand sanitizer near to the door once you enter the church and when you leave. Families may stay together and if someone feel sick should stay home. Your donations and offertory envelopes can be dropped off before or after mass in one of the two baskets located in front of the altar.

A special thanks to Sacristans, Ushers, Eucharistic Ministers, Lectors, projectionists and the Choir for your patience and understanding. I know how much you all enjoy your ministries but we have simplified our liturgies for safety.

A sincere gratitude to all parishioners, full time and part time, for your financial support during these months we have been unable to fulfil our pastoral activities in the regular way we used to. May the Lord reward you in this life for your generosity and solidarity and more abundantly in the life to come.

We are working to provide an online Faith Formation this coming fall for Children and Adults, as well as with the youth group and Bible Study. More information will be provided soon. We are offering free face masks for those who need them, just stop in the church narthex to get them; remember that what we know about this virus is not much but it is enough to stay safe for each other.

Finally, I wish to ask you for a special prayer on July 5th, after Independence Day, on my 50th Birthday, that I may persevere serving the Lord with joy and hope.

Fraternally in Jesus,

Fr. Lorenzo