

UPDATE FROM FR. FISHER REGARDING
ST. AMBROSE CHURCH'S RESPONSE TO COVID-19

March 17, 2020

Dear Parishioners of St. Ambrose Parish,

As the ongoing news of the COVID-19 virus hits closer to home, Bishop Burbidge has issued important guidelines for the parishes, schools, ministries, and charities in the Diocese of Arlington. Although these guidelines will temporarily interrupt the regular life of the parish, these guidelines were made in an abundance of caution as the health and wellbeing of our parishioners is a top priority. The diocesan guidelines, as well as a video by the bishop introducing them, can be found on both the diocesan website (arlingtondiocese.org) and our parish website (stambroseva.org).

In fidelity to the diocesan guidelines and precautions, I would like to share with you how St. Ambrose parish will move forward:

1. All public Masses (including Sunday, Holy Day, and weekday Masses) are suspended until further notice. However, the priests of the parish will celebrate Mass each day without a congregation, for your intentions and the intentions of the parish.
2. Confessions will still be heard at the regularly scheduled times in the Church. However, they will not be heard in the confessionals, as the space is too small. Until further notice, one priest will be stationed in the priest's sacristy and the other priest will be stationed in the church's cry room. Both rooms will be set up to ensure an anonymous confession and the proper distance between priest and penitent. In addition, an usher will be present at the church doors during confession times to ensure there are no more than ten people in the church waiting in line.
3. The church will continue to remain open to the faithful each day during regular hours. On weekdays the church is open from 6:00 am until 7:00 pm, on Saturdays it is open from 8:00 am until 6:00 pm, and on Sundays it is open from 7:00 am until 6:00 pm. In the absence of Mass, please know you are encouraged to make a visit to the church and spend time praying before the Blessed Sacrament. A table in the foyer has free booklets and devotions that can be done while visiting the church. Please feel free to take the materials and keep them for your use.
4. During the season of Lent, the Wednesday evening "The Light is On" program will continue. On Wednesday evening confession and Eucharistic Adoration will be held in the church from 6:30 pm until 8:00 pm. However, an usher will be present at the front doors of the church to allow only ten people in the church at a time.
5. Members of the St. Ambrose parish maintenance staff will clean the church pews, restrooms, and door handles each day to prevent the spread of germs. Further, a hand sanitizer station has been placed in the foyer of the church for all who are coming and going.
6. At this time visits to the sick and homebound in the parish, by clergy and Extra-Ordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are suspended. The diocese has given permission for the priests to visit the dying or those with the coronavirus. Our parish clergy and staff are in regular communication with the homebound and local nursing homes to ensure all pastoral care needs are covered.
7. Weddings, funerals, and baptisms will be allowed to take place at St. Ambrose parish. However, only if necessary, and will be limited to immediate family members.
8. All scheduled Lenten parish actives are suspended – Stations of the Cross, Lenten Soup Suppers, Mornings of Reflection, Retreats, Mark Forrest's Evening of Music and Prayer, and the annual Youth Living Stations of the Cross.
9. St. Ambrose School is closed until April 10th, as are all Fairfax County Public Schools. During this time teachers will be in communication with students and parents to continue education programs. In addition, at this time members of the St. Ambrose Parish maintenance staff will be sanitizing and disinfecting the school building.

10. Religious Education Classes are suspended until April 19th. In the meantime, catechists will be sending out weekly home work assignments for students via email. 7th Grade students (and those preparing for the Sacrament of Confirmation in the fall) will be given special projects and videos to watch over the break as a part of the Confirmation preparation.
11. Parish Adult Faith Formation programs are suspended until further notice. Members of the Adult Bible Study program have been given information on how to access the video guide website, and how to follow along with the classes in their workbooks.
12. The RCIA and RCIC classes have been suspended until further notice. Members of these classes have been sent videos to watch that correspond to the assigned weekly class topics and readings.
13. All Parish Youth Ministry programs are suspended until further notice. These programs include Kolbe's Kids, TGIF, and the Sunday evening God Squad. Mrs. Therese Ryan, the Parish Youth Minister, has sent up emails, Instagram, and Facebook to connect with students on line. All teens are encouraged to check in with Mrs. Ryan.
14. All parish organizations and ministries that meet on campus are suspended until further notice. This includes the Knights of Columbus, WSA, Legion of Mary, Rosary Makers, Parish Adult Choir, Young Adult Group, Light Works and the Parish Knitting Group. Likewise all social events that were scheduled to be held in the parish hall have been postponed.
15. Envelopes will be placed in the foyer of the church for Mass intentions or donations to the parish. Envelopes can be dropped off at the parish office or in the poor box located in the foyer of the church. Thank you for your support of the parish, especially at this time.
16. The St. Ambrose Parish Office will remain open during regular office hours. All St. Ambrose parish staff will be present and able to assist you.
17. The St. Ambrose Parish website will be updated regularly with news and information. Please follow along with both diocesan and parish updates.

Lastly, I ask for your prayers. We are living in times of great anxiety and suffering. We need to remain prayerful and strong in our faith. While we are at home or on a reduced work schedule, let us find time for extra prayer, both as individuals and as families. Let us unite our prayers with the daily prayers of Pope Francis, Bishop Burbidge, the Church throughout the world, and all of St. Ambrose parish. Our new found free time can be used by praying the rosary or Divine Mercy Chaplet, reading the gospels or a biography of a saint, watching a movie on Formed.org or EWTN, or viewing Mass on any one of the many websites that live stream or broadcast Mass.

Please be assured that you and your loved ones have a special place in the daily prayers of the clergy and staff of St. Ambrose parish. Do not hesitate to contact us with special prayer intentions or if you are in need of assistance.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Rev. Andrew Fisher
Pastor