

Dear Friends,

Like so many of you from whom I've heard and with whom I've spoken these past few months, I have to admit that I'm exhausted. It's deep exhaustion, one that also could easily slip into burn-out if left to fester. It is certainly not something to be trifled with, but I also don't want any of you to worry. I'm not worried precisely because I'm writing about it, because I'm talking about it, and because I've already been reaching out to my support network.

So why the public confession? My hope is that this can serve as a reminder to anyone who is feeling overwhelmed by these past few months or perhaps more recently by the powerful and necessary reckoning with the persistent and systemic sin of racism in our country. It is easy to feel alone and isolated, lost and confused. You are not alone. You don't have to go through this alone. This strange, painful, and confusing moment of history is where we all are, and it is where God meets us.

We will continue to learn new ways to check in on each other. We will struggle through new procedures and new norms. We will be worn out by continually shifting guidelines and protocols. And we will do all of this together. We'll do it imperfectly, and I have no doubt that I (and most of us) will need to seek forgiveness when exhaustion keeps us from being our best selves. In both our failures and successes, God will meet us, and we will be together.

With all this talk of togetherness, you might also wonder, "Can we be together physically?" Let me make something very clear: during a pandemic, attending large public gatherings is both a personal and a public health risk. No one is obligated to attend public Masses, especially those in high-risk categories. Yet, you can also weigh your own choices, and if you feel that attending Mass is an acceptable risk, you will have some options.

Bellarmino Chapel will restart public Masses on Wednesday, July 1st. Each Monday - Friday, we will offer a 5:00 PM public Mass in the Chapel. These daily Masses will continue to be available on livestream as well.

On July 5th, we will restart public Sunday Masses at 11:30 AM and 4:00 PM. Public Sunday Masses will not include music. They will have shortened homilies and will not

be livestreamed. To plan for social distancing, these public Sunday Masses will also require reservations in advance. The bulletin next week will include guidelines for attending public Mass as well as instructions explaining how to reserve a space at those Masses.

The 9:00 AM Sunday livestream will continue to be a non-public Mass. By reducing the number of people present in the Chapel during the Sunday livestream, we can continue to offer regular-length homilies and full musical accompaniment.

Many of you will notice that these reopening plans represent a new morning Mass schedule. Throughout the year, we have spoken to the entire parish about the need for more faith formation time in between the morning Masses. We've held listening sessions and surveyed the entire parish. Based on your input and after careful consideration, we are adjusting our "normal" Mass schedule to 9:00 AM, 11:30 AM, and 7:00 PM. We hope that we will be able to return to this new schedule in the Fall, but as with all things, this could change depending on public health advisories.

I know you have continued to pray for each other, for the parish staff and for me. Please keep up the prayers; we certainly need them and appreciate them. Even on the days when we are all frustrated and exhausted, I know we can also feel consoled and strengthened because we are walking along this journey together.

Much love and many prayers,
Fr. Eric