

Pastor's Notes: Confessions and Religious Education on the Weekends

September 6, 2020

I am excited to be able to resume two offerings that we have missed since the beginning of the pandemic: **confessions before our weekend Masses**, which begin this weekend, and **Religious Education classes for First Holy Communion and Confirmation**, which will begin next weekend on September 13th.

Confessions

Throughout the pandemic, we have had to limit our offering of confessions to times when fewer people are in the church. Beginning this weekend, we are able to offer confessions on our previous schedule: a half hour before each Mass during the weekends as well as during the week (except the 7 am). To meet the social distancing requirements, we will have private confessionals set up in Varallo Parish Hall during the weekends. On weekdays, we will continue to use the confessionals in the church.

Resumption of Sacramental Preparation Classes

In-person classes for First Holy Communion and Confirmation are now being held Sundays from 10:15 to 11:15 am starting next Sunday, September 13. Other grades (pre-K to high school) will have a combination of virtual classes and home activities at other times during the week. We will be stretched to space our students out sufficiently in the RE Building for the Sacramental preparation classes. Because of that space limitation, we are not able to open the classes up to parents to attend this year. The question presents itself: what might your family do while some of your children are in class?

What You Can Do during the Sunday Time between Masses

In the past we offered various activities between the morning Masses, including RCIA, The Deacon's Table, choir practice, browsing or volunteering in the Ombrellino Gift shop, and the nursery was available. At this time of special safety and health provisions, we are not yet able to resume our programs in the same way on Sunday mornings. However, for those of you who whose children are preparing for the Sacraments, as well as all parishioners, there are some creative ways that I would encourage you to pass this time on Sunday mornings:

Volunteer for cleaning after the 9am Mass (as well as other Masses). We have had a few people cleaning every single Sunday since we resumed public Masses, and they could use some relief! Sign up for this much-needed service by emailing admin@stspeterandpaulbasilica.com, and feel free to join them after any Mass.

Sit in the church and pray (socially distanced), after the cleaning is completed. This is a good time to do a holy hour in the presence of Our Lord in the Tabernacle.

Go to confession— As noted above, confessionals will be set up in Varallo Hall from 11—11:30am (and 30 minutes before our other Masses also).

Find an outdoor space on campus— Although we are not able to hold regular indoor meetings due to all the coronavirus protocols right now, there are a number of outdoor spaces where you could sit alone or congregate in smaller, socially distanced groups, weather permitting:

- The Marian grotto
- The rectory lawn
- The office patio
- The side deck of the RE Building outside the kitchen

Go off-campus— Of course you are free to leave campus to have coffee or breakfast, go for a walk, etc., and return for pick-up. Sunday morning can be an opportunity for your family to explore what our downtown Chattanooga neighborhood has to offer.

Self-Guided Spiritual Activities— Here are some worthwhile activities I encourage you to consider to take on either individually or as small groups either in one of our outdoor spaces or off-campus, either by yourself, as a family, or in a small discussion group, that would be most appropriate on Sunday morning:

- Pray a Rosary
- Study Scripture
- Read a spiritual book
- Explore the many programs available on our FORMED subscription. Visit the FORMED page on our website under Resources to get started.

As the old saying goes— when life gives you lemons, make lemonade—so too, in this time of coronavirus adaptation, we can make opportunities for spiritual enrichment.

