

INITIAL LIMITED PUBLIC MASS RE-OPENING PROCEDURES

[These procedures are subject to revision upon receipt of any additional guidance from Bishop, the Governor and/or any other governing entity, as well as any ways we find to improve the process as we go along.]

Welcome back! We are excited to be able to welcome those of you who will be able to join us. As we reopen our church in phases, we wanted to explain the procedures we are putting in place that will help keep you and those around you safe during Mass. Please be patient with each other and us as we learn these new procedures. Good humor, understanding and patience are very much appreciated and will add to our joy as we welcome each other back. Please remember this is a new world for all of us and we are doing our very best.

Remember:

*Please follow CDC recommendations regarding your own health. If you are at higher risk for severe illness according to the CDC (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-at-higher-risk.html>) we strongly encourage you to stay home and join us for Mass online. We will continue to post Sunday Mass on our website (www.stmnj.org) and our YouTube Channel. We are encouraging you to stay home because we care about you! **If you are sick or symptomatic, taking care of someone who is ill, or living with a sick or symptomatic person you must stay home.** Additionally, if for any reason you are unable or unwilling to abide by each of these procedures, we must also ask you to remain home. Each person who enters our doors is relying on compliance with these guidelines to make us all as safe and comfortable as possible. Please respect the health of those around you as well as your own by following these procedures.*

As a reminder, Bishop Serratelli has continued to dispense the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation. The purpose is to enable anyone who chooses not to or is unable to attend Mass because of COVID-19 or other concerns to be serenely free. We are continuing to consider options for distribution of Communion for those who are at greater risk or will not be able to come to Mass. Please pay attention to the website and Flocknotes for further information.

MASS SIGN-UPS:

We will celebrate public Masses at a capacity of **no more than 60 people** at each Mass. We will begin with Sunday Masses only. The number of Masses each weekend will vary, starting at first with only one as we attempt a “soft reopen” to work through the system. **Initially, only those who have registered or contributed as parishioners and have provided an email address will receive a Flocknote with the link for sign-ups. Each individual will need to be signed up separately, even if part of the same family, so we can accurately gauge capacity. Please take care to avoid duplicate signups so we can allow as many people to come as possible. Please also take note of the signup cutoff time that will be referenced in the email. After that deadline we will open any remaining spots to non-registered parishioners. Also, if you reserve a spot but later cannot come, please cancel your reservation to allow someone else the opportunity to attend.**

Any online sign-up will be confirmed immediately. Any registered parishioner without access to a computer may leave a message on the parish voicemail at 973-267-5330 requesting to sign up for a specific Mass. Voicemail requests will be granted on first come, first serve basis, subject to availability. Those who have left a voicemail will receive a call letting you know if your requested Mass was available. To avoid any unnecessary trips, if you request a reservation by phone, please do not come to Mass unless you receive a call confirming your reservation.

Once we get a better feel for the demand for Mass, if we find additional spaces are available, we will also post the sign-up on our website. **While we hope to be able to accommodate everyone who wishes to**

attend, if we find any Mass is reaching capacity, we may institute a weekly rotation system to confirm that everyone has equal opportunity to attend Sunday Mass.

WHEN ATTENDING MASS:

Before you arrive at church:

Before you arrive for Mass, please wash your hands for 20 seconds with soap and water. Please use the restroom before coming to church. Our restrooms will be available only in case of emergency and will be cleaned before and after each Mass. If you do need to use the restroom, please allow for only one occupant at a time (with the exception, of course, for an infant, young child or anyone else needing assistance).

Arrival at church:

Please remember to bring and wear a facemask that completely covers your mouth and nose. Unfortunately, Greeters are required to turn away anyone who does not have a facemask for the safety of all.

Please note only the front, main entrance to the church will be open. All other doors will remain locked. This door will be open 20 minutes prior to the start of Mass to ensure time to sanitize and clean the church. This also allows time to have our volunteers ready to serve you. Please remain in your vehicle until the front door has been unlocked and opened. **As you approach the church please keep a six-foot distance from anyone outside of your household.**

Please bring your own hand sanitizer to use during Mass. Greeters will check you in on the reservation list and dispense sanitizer on your hands at the entrance of the church as you enter.

In the church, every third pew will be available for seating. ***Please note this important change: For now, each family will be seated by a Seater who will be responsible for filling the Church starting from the front and finishing in back. Please understand this means you will not be able to choose a preferred or "regular" seat.*** Once seated, please do not leave your pew for the entirety of Mass absent an emergency. For the safety and comfort of all, we must require that no one gather in the vestibule, Sacristy or anywhere else inside the church other than in your assigned seat. Please note unfortunately the priest will not be able to meet with anyone before or after Mass. If you would like to set up a time to speak with Father Tom or another priest, please call or email to schedule a separate appointment.

If the seating in the church reaches our 60-person capacity, the Greeters will not be permitted to allow anyone else into the church. If this happens, you may return for a later Mass (when available) or watch online. Our registration for Mass should help to eliminate this problem. Greeters will be checking people in and asking those who have not registered to wait in their cars to see if a seat is available.

During Mass:

All are required to wear a facemask, fully covering their nose and mouth, for the duration of Mass. A collection will not be taken during the offertory, but a collection basket will be placed close to the entrance for your convenience. If you have not already, we strongly encourage you to set up your donations through online giving. Online giving is dependable, safe and of course much lower risk for possible transmission of COVID-19. You can sign up for online giving here: <https://stthommore.weshareonline.org/>.

We have been informed that singing expels significantly more droplets into the air and therefore increases the risk of spreading COVID-19. In response, the Diocese has determined that it is best to temporarily suspend congregational singing. Additionally, per Diocesan directives, Altar Servers will not assist at the Altar until a later date when the risk of contagion is further ameliorated. There will also be no Lectors or Eucharistic Ministers until further notice.

There should be no physical contact between different households before, during or after Mass. There will be no sign of peace, and we ask that you do not hold hands with anyone outside of your household during the Our Father. During the Communion Rite of the Mass, only the celebrant will receive Communion. *However, Holy Communion will be distributed immediately following the final blessing, as described below.*

Reception of Holy Communion:

Please note the distribution of the Precious Blood remains discontinued for the foreseeable future. The Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Christ is received under either species. If you would like to receive Holy Communion, after the final blessing and dismissal please remain in your seat and kneel or be seated. The celebrant will announce if he will come to each pew or direct you somewhere else, depending upon the number of people present. *Please do not approach for Holy Communion until you are directed to do so.*

Reception of Holy Communion will take place in this way: A volunteer will dispense sanitizer on your hands before you approach the priest. He will hold up the Host and say through his facemask, "The Body of Christ." Please reply "Amen," and then remove your facemask. Extend your hands at a distance with one hand flat and the other underneath it. Please do not wear gloves as they are unbecoming of the Blessed Sacrament. Receive Communion. Then please depart immediately.

If the priest has touched the hand of a communicant, he will re-sanitize his hands before distributing to the next communicant.

The Diocese has indicated that Communion should be received on the hand during this time. If that is not possible for you, please indicate this to your Seater before Mass so alternate arrangements may be made. Likewise, please notify your Seater before Mass if you require a Low Gluten Host so those arrangements can be made as well.

Departure:

Please do not linger in or outside the church or in the parking lot. We know everyone is excited to be back and see each other, but we need to continue our social distancing efforts as we slowly re-open. There will be no hard copy bulletins at this time or collection envelopes in the vestibule. Bulletins will continue to be available online.

Let us continue to pray for one another in preparation for the day when COVID-19 is far less of a threat and all of us can be reunited (physically) in prayer and worship.

We are greatly looking forward to seeing you again!

Praise be Jesus Christ now and forever!

