

Regathering as a Parish Community

Bishop Gainer is permitting a limited return to Public Holy Mass and a partial reopening of Church buildings for Parishes in 'Yellow Phase' counties. Please understand that this process will cautiously proceed according to the directives of the Diocese of Harrisburg, informed by the guidelines of Government Authorities and Public Health Officials, and prudential pastoral judgement (each parish will implement reopening differently due to various factors, including physical circumstances, community dynamics, health concerns, etc.). To this end, given the number of cautions remaining in place, there should be no expectation of simply returning to our early-March status of Parish life.

WHO should return to Holy Mass?

A dispensation from the Sunday and Holy Day obligations to attend Holy Mass remains in effect in the Diocese of Harrisburg until further notice; also, a dispensation from the precept to receive Holy Communion during the Easter Season has been granted by Bishop Gainer. All are encouraged to exercise prudence as they consider when to return to Holy Mass. Anyone who is in an at-risk health group (e.g.: older adults, persons with severe medical conditions, etc.) or those who do not feel comfortable attending a public gathering should stay home. Even with the increased efforts to clean the Church, there is a risk of infection anytime a person enters a public space. Anyone who has a cough of any sort, is sick, or has any symptoms of illness should refrain from attending Holy Mass to safeguard the health of others.

WHAT restrictions will be in place at Church?

Social distancing will be practiced within the Church. Entrances/Exits will be designated with signage. Two-thirds of pews will be closed with rope. During this phase of reopening, the maximum capacity of a Church is to be less than 1/3 of typical capacity. Everyone is asked to wear a mask continuously for the entire time they are within the Church Building (exception for children under 3), and all are encouraged to bring hand sanitizer and/or sanitizing wipes, for their own personal use. An usher will be available to help persons as they arrive for Holy Mass. Holy Communion will be distributed to the faithful immediately after Holy Mass has concluded in order to communicate the new procedures and to comply with new directives. Only the priest will distribute Holy Communion. The reception of Holy Communion is recommended to occur in the hand, however this is not a requirement. After Holy Mass, detailed instructions will be given and ushers will assist to form a line that maintains adequate spacing to aid those receiving Holy Communion.

HOW will these restrictions be implemented?

For Holy Mass an usher will greet persons as they arrive, all will be required to wear a mask continuously while they are in Church and to maintain social distances. Ushers will keep count of the persons in attendance and help with seating for Holy Mass. If the Church reaches 1/3 capacity the designated entrance/exit door will be closed and a sign will be posted stating that capacity has been reached. After Holy Mass, persons can visit the Church – all will be required to maintain social distancing and wear a mask continuously while in Church. Ushers will implement these regulations.

WHEN will Holy Mass resume?

The weekend of May 16/17 Holy Mass will resume in a restricted manner. In light of the dispensations, many cautions, and severe limits to capacity, during this phase of reopening individuals/families are asked to limit attendance at Holy Mass to once per week (either a weekday or weekend) as an act of charity. Initially, the Holy Mass schedule has been altered. Daily Mass will be offered at 9 am Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday at Sacred Heart Church. Weekend Masses will be offered at 5 pm on Saturday, 8 am, and 12 Noon on Sunday at Sacred Heart Church. When it is reasonable, the 10 am Sunday Mass at Saint George Church will be restored. This schedule is a first effort constructed in light of the current directives and the many cautionary recommendations, it is provisional and will be modified as prudent.

AND... What about... ?

More detailed information regarding **Visits to the Church, Attending Holy Mass, Confessions, and Pastoral Visits** are on the additional sheets and posted on the Parish Website: www.sacredheartofjesus.org. Our engagement with the life of the Church will be different in these strange days, our experiences will be limited and irregular. Further, in the coming weeks there will be additional adjustments – your patience and understanding is much appreciated!

Visits to the Church and Attending Holy Mass

General Guidelines for Entering Church

Although best efforts will be made to keep the Church clean, given the many cautions and recommendations, all are advised that a risk is assumed by choosing to enter the Church. During this phase of reopening the Church there are many new procedures that must be observed, and unique policies for safety and to allow for proper cleaning:

- A single Entrance/Exit will be designated by signage. To enter Sacred Heart Church, use the double doors of the Education Building Lobby West Entrance (near the parking lot and handicap accessible entrance of the Church).
- All visitors must wear a face mask continuously (children under 3 are exempt) and maintain 6' social distancing.
- Family members do not need to maintain social distance between each other, if they live together.
- Church capacity will be limited to 1/3 typical capacity: for Sacred Heart Church this is a maximum of 90 people.
- Meetings or events, as well as any congregating and/or gatherings, anywhere in Church buildings are prohibited.
- All are asked to bring their own hand sanitizer and/or sanitizing wipes, for your own personal use.
- Due to the increased cleaning demands expect limited or no access to facilities: restrooms will be restricted to emergencies only, also "Cry Rooms" and other rooms in the Church Building will remain closed and locked.
- **Persons who have a cough of any sort, are sick, or have any symptoms of illness are not to enter the Church.**
- Sacred Heart Church will be open for individual visits on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday after the Morning Mass and closing at 3 pm on these days for cleaning; and the Church will be closed all day on Wednesday.
- Church doors will open 30 minutes prior to Holy Mass, when they are scheduled.
- Sacred Heart Church will only be open for Holy Masses on weekends: Saturday Evening and Sunday Morning.

Limited Capacity and Attendance at Holy Mass:

The dispensation from the Sunday Obligation and Holy Days of Obligations continues until further notice, the precept to receive Holy Communion at least once during the Easter Season is also dispensed.

Restricted Public Holy Mass will resume the weekend of May 16/17. Those who choose to attend Holy Mass at this time are informed of the following, in addition to the 'General Guidelines for Entering Church' noted above:

- Ushers will greet and assist persons as they enter the Church and attend Holy Mass.
- During this phase of reopening, in light of the dispensations, many cautions, and the 1/3 Church capacity, households are asked to limit attendance at Holy Mass to once per week (either a weekday or a weekend) as an act of charity.
- Daily Mass will be offered at 9 am Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday at Sacred Heart Church.
- Weekend Masses will be offered at 5 pm on Saturday, 8 am, and 12 Noon on Sunday all at Sacred Heart Church (when it is reasonable, considering the new demands of cleaning and safety, the goal is to restore the 10 am Mass).
- No Altar Servers or Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are to serve at Holy Mass at this time, all liturgical ministry and volunteer schedules are voided – new schedules will be created when necessary.
- Hymnals have been removed from the pews and music ministry will be reduced, to comply with directives.
- The distribution of Holy Communion for the faithful will occur immediately after the Holy Mass is concluded: ushers will assist in forming a line with persons spaced out and masks will be pulled down (or temporarily placed in a pocket) immediately prior to reception of Holy Communion per the instructions of the priest and ushers.
- Reception of Holy Communion is recommended to occur in the hand, however this is not a requirement.

Confession, Pastoral Visits, and More

The Sacrament of Confession

Given the prolonged absence from the Sacraments of the Church and our current circumstances many should seek the Mercy of God through the reception of the Sacrament of Confession, especially prior to receiving Holy Communion. The opportunity to receive the Sacrament of Confession will be responsive to demand, according to the directives of the Diocese of Harrisburg and informed by the guidelines of Government Authorities and Public Health Officials, as well as prudential pastoral judgement. The following is a temporary schedule for Confessions at Saint George Church:

- Tuesdays May 19 and May 26: Outdoor Confessions will be offered from 2 pm – 4 pm
- Thursdays May 21 and May 28: Outdoor Confession will be offered from 2 pm – 4 pm
- Saturdays May 23 and May 30: Outdoor Confession will be offered from 10 am – 12 Noon

All of these opportunities will be at Saint George Church (775 Forest Hills Road, Mifflinburg), specific details on exact location on the property will vary in response to weather conditions and prudential pastoral judgement. Signage will be posted to direct persons when they arrive, in order to maintain safe distances and observe reverence for the sacrament.

All are encouraged to take the time to prepare for the Sacrament of Confession prior to arrival at one of the appointed times to receive the sacrament; all should examine their consciences according to the Word of God and Teachings of the Church, be prepared to plainly state all of their sins, and to pray an Act of Contrition.

Pastoral Visits to the Sick and Homebound:

Pastoral Visits to the sick and homebound can occur '*as needed*' by the priest, routine visits will not resume at this phase. Extreme caution will be exercised during any Pastoral Visit. Meeting outdoors is preferred for a Pastoral Visit, if possible. Requests to schedule a Pastoral Visit can be arranged by calling the Parish Office.

Anyone '*in danger of death*' should immediately call the Rectory (570-523-3104) to contact Father Wilke and receive the Sacraments of the Church, The Last Rites.

Persons admitted to the hospital who need a priest for the Sacraments of the Church must communicate this request to the Hospital Staff or Hospital Chaplain. Hospital Policies are diverse between locations and varied between portions of the same building. If a visit from a priest is determined appropriate, the Hospital Staff will contact a priest to permit a Pastoral Visit with a specific patient on a 'case-by-case' basis. All Hospital Regulations concerning the visitation of clergy are subject to change, please consult with Hospital Staff for any clarifications and/or updates.

More Information is Available

Liturgical and Sacramental Guidelines for the Diocese of Harrisburg are available at:

www.hbgdiocese.org/faith-in-time-of-coronavirus/

Visit the Parish Website for additional information: www.sacredheartofjesus.org