

Hello!

April 24, 2020

I hope this finds you all healthy and well and supporting each other. As soon as I start settling in to this new “normal,” we get to make adjustments. The Diocese approved our plan, and Masses will be offered this Sunday, April 26, with many specifications. Please read all, trust your intuition, and whether we are gathered in church or in our homes we are still united in prayer. So, read on for tons of details:

1- If you or a member of your household is vulnerable due to age or health conditions, please stay home. The dispensation from the obligation to attend Mass is still in effect. Likewise if you feel uncomfortable attending a public gathering, know that it is very okay to continue staying home. Bishop Vetter will continue to live-stream Masses, and many resources are still available to you. (*Vulnerable Individuals are defined as people over 65 years of age, people with serious underlying health conditions, including high blood pressure, chronic lung disease, diabetes, obesity, or asthma, and people whose immune system is compromised such as by chemotherapy for cancer or other conditions requiring such therapy*)

2- If you or a member of your household is at all sick, please stay home out of respect for each other.

3- If you are ready to attend Mass...

- Sunday, April 26 will be the first day. No Mass on Saturday, April 25.
- Attendance can only be greater than 10 if we can ensure proper social distancing. We’ve measured the space in each church and will be limiting attendance so that we can maintain a minimum of 6 feet between each family unit. In every other pew, parishioners can sit in alternate sides of the pews (one family on the wall side, empty pew, next family on the aisle side, empty pew...) Once the church is filled to safe capacity, no one else will be allowed in.
- As you enter and exit the church, please leave 6 feet between you and the next family. At the end of Mass feel free to linger in prayer and let others leave with ample space.
- There will not be a sign of peace or procession with the offertory.
- Parishioners can drop their offering in the collection basket before or after Mass. Baskets will be in front near the altar and another in the back of the church. If you prefer to mail in your offering the address for St. Joseph is PO Box 640 Choteau, MT 59422 and the address for St. John and St. Matthias is PO Box 397 Fairfield, MT 59436. (Thank you for supporting your church!!!)
- Distribution of Holy Communion is to be offered in the hand only, with just care and reverence and at Father’s discretion. The chalice will not be offered to the parishioners.
- It is okay to choose not to receive the Eucharist even if you are at Mass (this is always okay!)
- Hand sanitizer is available in all 3 of our churches – please use it when you enter.
- Holy Water fonts have been emptied – please try not to touch any surface of the font or church unnecessarily.
- Masks are encouraged personal protective wear. Please feel free to wear one.
- All 3 of our churches have been thoroughly cleaned (Thank you Angie, Marge & Kathy!!). We have cleaning plans in place to make sure every surface that parishioners touch is sanitized before the next Mass, but, as this will be a need for a while, more volunteers would be appreciated.
- If potential crowds concern you, consider attending daily Mass on Wednesday in Choteau or Thursday in Fairfield.
- A greeter will talk with you before you enter the church to remind you of these things and probably give you more directions as we begin this next phase.

4- Keep praying for each other, our civil leaders and our priests and Bishop Vetter. Do not feel like you need to rush to this step. Let’s keep praying for each other and checking on each other. And look for another e-mail very soon talking about RE classes, youth group and Sacraments. This Sunday, Fairfield’s youth group will still meet via google hangouts, but I don’t have anything else sorted through yet. But I also know that even at 6ft or greater distance, it will be really wonderful to see a few of you this Sunday. You all remain in my prayers.

May God bless you always,
Laura Toeckes, Pastoral Assistant