

Pastoral letter from Father Jack to the people of St. John the Apostle Parish

Bishop Olson sent his latest Pastoral Letter Friday evening. Please read it either directly from the Diocese of Fort Worth website, or follow the link from our own parish website. What follows is how I understand the implementation of the bishop's instructions for us at St. John the Apostle. However, in no way, and at no time, does anything I say replace, change or supersede anything the Bishop asks or orders.

At all times, in all places, obey the instructions of the Federal, state and local authorities.

- At no time will be celebrating any Masses or liturgies outside; there must not be ANY gatherings of any kind on parish grounds.
- Generally speaking, we must all proactively work to minimize the presence of anyone in any building. At all times, anyone coming for Communion at Mass, confession, or adoration is to maintain a minimum of 6 feet separation from all other persons.
- Father Anh and I will celebrate all Masses at the regular times for our parish, for any stipended or logged intention. This includes not only our Sunday Masses but the weekday ones as well.
- Only those ministers necessary for a particular Mass will attend; while music ministry can greatly enrich our liturgies I ask that no musicians be present. This means that, at most, there will be a deacon, an acolyte or server with the priest.
- When coming to Communion, DO NOT LEAVE YOUR CAR. Follow the instructions of the usher who will guide you to the Eucharistic ministers. You will park, get out of your car, receive Communion, make any offering or tithe in the container provided, return to your car and drive away toward the school and Frawley Drive. No one, will be admitted to the church on Sunday or at daily Mass.
- We will livestream every Mass, weekends and weekdays, via the internet. See the parish website for information (www.sjtanrh.com).
- St. Patrick Cathedral will livestream their 11am Sunday Mass. See the Diocese of Fort Worth website for more information (www.fwdioc.org).
- Priests and extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion in the age range of 19-59 may distribute Communion to family members of homebound elderly or ill, using a clean paper towel to carry the Blessed Sacrament. The family members will carry the consecrated host(s) reverently to their homebound relative, and then immediately burn the paper towel (a charcoal grill would serve for this purpose). The minister of Communion outside the church after Mass, or delivering to the sick and homebound, will wash their hands before and after distribution of Communion with hot water and soap for at least 20 seconds.
- The Bishop asks that no more than 10 people will be allowed in the church sanctuary at one time for private and individual adoration. Our parish is voluntarily limiting that number to 8; we rarely have more than that at one time. To sign up for adoration please see our parish website. Currently we plan adoration every day, Monday through Friday, from noon to 1pm. This may be expanded if demand is high. Always maintain the 6-foot separation. An usher or staff member will open the locked west side door at the appointed time. In order to maintain security and safety, only those listed on the sign-up will be allowed to enter. The church is being sprayed with a commercial disinfectant with an advertised 60 day residual effectiveness. Please do not bring wipes to the church. If your judgment tells you to mistrust our disinfectant, please do not enter.
- St. John will not celebrate funeral Masses, but once the crisis is ended loved ones can schedule a memorial Mass at a later date. A graveside service can be celebrated with up to 10 people present, keeping to the 6-foot separation at all times.
- There will be no private Masses in homes.

- We have no weddings on our calendar until May. We pray that the protocols are lifted by then, but if not, any wedding will take place with only a priest or deacon, the couple, and 2 witnesses.
- We will not be able to celebrate quinceañeras during the crisis.
- Confessions: we will continue to offer the Sacrament of Reconciliation. We are continually exploring ways to celebrate within the protocol, protecting both the penitent and the priest. However, it will be awkward. Our current plan is for the priest to be inside the doors, behind a lightweight screen, inside the foyer near Child Care, with the doors slightly ajar. A table outside the doors will help keep people 6 feet away. Ushers will see that a respectful distance is maintained and the 6-foot spacing is held.
- Baptisms: Baptisms may continue with only the parents, infant and godparents present, maintaining 6-foot spacing. We are reminded that anyone may baptize when there is a danger of death. The person doing the baptism pours water over the person's head while saying, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." At the earliest opportunity notify the nearest parish to register the baptism (probably by email).
- Visits by clergy to nursing homes and hospitals is not restricted by the Executive Order Expanded Guidance. Please see the Bishop's letter for a link to the order.
- Pastoral ministry should be initiated by phone contact by family members for loved ones.
- We are all encouraged to support our local food banks. Donations for our Social Outreach food bank may be left outside the north office door. There are three blue stripes on the door.
- Ushers will have a stationary basket for tithes and offerings for ministries to the poor at the outdoor Communion distribution point.
- Those over 60 or with chronic health conditions that can compromise immunity are STRONGLY encouraged to stay at home. When any one of us gets sick in the current conditions we put everyone around us at risk as well, especially family and health care workers.
- All catechesis will be online; no gatherings, including the scrutinies are permitted.
- Diocese Schools will remain closed through April 3, 2020. Mrs. Felton is sending out emails on a regular basis. Please check them often for updates.

Please cooperate with all civil authorities, local, county, state, and federal.

Please refrain from spreading rumors. Vet any news by checking government and professional news service sites. Do not give in to fear or panic. This is an unusually unnerving time, but with God's grace and charity for one another, we will see the end of this eventually.

Finally, know that you are in my prayers. Every day, one of my intentions is for YOUR intentions, and for this parish. God bless us all.