



St. Mary's
Catholic Church

A Letter from Fr. John

Dear parishioners and families of St. Mary's,

First, let us rejoice that we will soon be together once again in greater numbers for the celebration of the Eucharist. As you all are aware Archbishop Gustavo announced last week that the public celebration of daily Masses beginning on Tuesday, May 19th, and the weekend Masses on May 23rd and 24th, the Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord will resume once again. However, the faithful who are concerned for their health are dispensed from the Sunday obligation, which will continue until the Archbishop revokes it. It has been approximately TEN weeks since the public celebration of Mass has been suspended due to global pandemic of COVID-19. As I type this letter, my prayer and hope is that you are doing your best with staying home and keeping safe. As Catholics, we place our trust and hope in our God, who in His mercy, leads us to the safe shores. At the moment, the parish staff and I are preparing to gradually open our parish for the public celebration of Mass. This involves deeper communication, profound personal and social responsibility. Based on the directives from the Archdiocese task force for COVID-19, and from civil health officials, we will be implementing these best practices/strict measures, to safeguard everyone's health.

These best practices will bring temporary changes to our liturgy. Here are just a few changes you see when you return to Mass. First, our Mass times will temporarily change in order to provide sufficient time to sanitize the church in between each Mass. We will be limited to 100 parishioners these next few weeks, as we do our best to gradually and safely reopen. A ticket and online reservation system will be utilized in order to reserve a seat for you or your family. These are but a few of the changes you will experience. Other changes you need to be aware of can be found below. Please keep in mind these changes are only temporary until which time we get a better handle on the pandemic.

Prior to Mass:

- **New Mass Times are SATURDAY 5PM, 7PM and SUNDAY 8AM, 10AM, and 12PM**
- **Due to the COVID-19 Social Distancing, We are currently limited to 100 people per Mass.**
- Tickets may be obtained by coming to the church office during regular business hours or by going to <http://stmarysmass.eventbrite.com> and registering online.
- ***If you are sick*** including fever, cough, sore throat, headache, or have compromised health, etc: **PLEASE STAY HOME.** The Archbishop's Decree exempts you from your Sunday obligation. ***We will pray for you.***
- Please arrive 20 minutes prior to Mass. We will begin seating 15 minutes prior to Mass.
- Masks are **not** required. **WE HIGHLY ENCOURAGE YOU TO WEAR A MASK.**

- **Restrooms are closed except for emergencies. Please attend to your restroom duties before leaving for Mass.**
- All hymnals have been removed from the pews. If you would like to bring your own Mass aids you may. <https://us.magnificat.net/free>

Arriving at Mass:

- Gather outside the front door of the Church. In bad weather, please gather in the Holy Family Center.
- Ushers will collect your tickets and escort you to your seat.
- If you have a disability and cannot enter via the front doors, please see an usher for access through a side door.

Mass:

- Mass will be the same, but different.
- Hand sanitizer will be available as you enter Church. We highly encourage its use.
- **PLEASE DO NOT SING OUT LOUD UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE. The Cantor and Pianist/Organist will provide music.** Please simply follow along in your heart.
- This is to prevent the possible spreading of any virus. Spoken responses are OK and encouraged.
- Please do not hold or shake hands at any time throughout the Mass. Simply acknowledge your neighbor with a head nod.
- Ushers will escort you to the front of Church to receive Communion or a blessing.
- **The Archbishop has required that the San Antonio Archdiocese distribute Holy Communion in the hand only.**
- At the conclusion of Mass, ushers will escort you out.
- We thank you for your continued support. For your convenience, the collection basket will be in the rear of Church as you leave Mass.

I have received a few emails and text messages from those of you over the age of 65. Many have asked if those 65 or older can come to Mass. The answer is absolutely **YES**. The Archbishop and I simply want to make sure that our seniors, those most at risk, know they still have a dispensation to the weekend Mass, should they choose to not to attend because of potential risks involved.

Lastly, I ask that each of us remain patient with one another and with these temporary changes. I know it is hard on many of you. Know that Fr. Jean Baptiste and myself, have never ceased praying for you and your families. Please continue being the amazing parishioners I have come to know. Let us love one another and be patient with all of these temporary changes. May we draw our strength from the abundance of God's love manifested through the sacrificial love of Jesus Christ. May the powerful intercession of our Blessed Mother help us in these times of uncertainty and bestow her manifold blessings upon us.

Your Brother in Christ Jesus,
Fr. John