

*My dear parishioners of Saint John Paul II parish;*

*May 23, 2020*

I'm sure you have heard that Bishop Tobin, in cooperation with Governor Raimondo, has agreed to open houses of worship in the State of Rhode Island again beginning Saturday, May 30<sup>th</sup>, for the Vigil of the Solemnity of Pentecost. I am sure everyone is as excited about this news as I am, but this permission is accompanied by restrictions that we must abide by for public safety.

It should be noted that Bishop Tobin's dispensation from the obligation for Catholics to attend Sunday Mass *IS STILL VALID*. If anyone has health issues making them especially vulnerable to the COVID-19 virus, or if anyone is over 60 years old, or if anyone is just uncomfortable returning to Mass at this time, you are *STILL* excused from attending. You may watch the Mass at home on TV, or a livestreamed Mass on the internet, and make a spiritual communion to fulfill your obligation. But for anyone who wishes to return to Church, public Masses are resuming.

If you feel sick, or not yourself, or if you are displaying ANY symptoms of a cold, no matter how slight, **PLEASE STAY HOME**. We've been hearing for months how contagious this virus is, and how easily it spreads. **THINK ABOUT OTHERS**. It is an act of love and charity to deny yourself the benefit of receiving the Eucharist to safeguard the wellbeing of other people. This thoughtfulness carries with it Graces of its own.

There will only be two entrances available to enter the Church; the main doors in front of the Church, and the elevator entrance for the elderly and handicapped. For social distancing reasons, people are only going to be able to use the elevator **TWO** at a time, so if you do not **NEED** to use the elevator, please use the stairs. Everyone **MUST** wear a mask or facial covering in Church. It is stated that it is only permissible for someone **NOT** to wear a mask if there is a medical reason, such as a respiratory problem. But if that applies, you probably shouldn't be going out in public in the first place.

There will be hand sanitizers stationed at the entrances of the Church. Please use these to sanitize your hands before entering the Church.

We are allowed to fill our church to 25% capacity. That means we can fit 179 people in the main Church, and 100 people in the Church Hall. (*The Church hall will be used as an overflow, once the Church has reached capacity. The Mass will be livestreamed to the Church hall via the internet, and Eucharistic ministers will be sent to the hall with the Eucharist at communion time. I don't foresee this situation occurring at any other Mass except the 10am.*) The pews in the Church to be occupied are marked with blue tape. For social distance requirements, and other logistical reasons listed below, **ONLY** sit in pews that are designated. Volunteers will be on hand to direct you. **PLEASE** cooperate with the volunteers.

The missals and prayer cards have been removed from the Church. You MAY use an electronic device; (*cell phone, tablet,*) to follow the readings, but these devices are to be used ONLY for that purpose. Also bulletins will no longer be printed. The parish bulletin will be only be accessible electronically on the parish website.

The offertory collection will NOT be taken up in the usual manner. We will have baskets at the entrances of the Church for you to leave your offering when entering or exiting.

Holy Communion will NOT be given out in the usual manner. **YOU WILL STAY IN YOUR PEWS.** The ministers of the Holy Eucharist will come to you, using the unoccupied pew in front of you. It is encouraged that during the crisis everyone receive in the hand, since the Corona virus can be spread by breathing on someone. With that said, we cannot DENY anyone communion on the tongue if they insist upon it. But immediately after the minister of Holy Communion distributes communion on the tongue, that minister must pause and immediately sanitize their hands before proceeding to the next communicant. NO ONE receiving communion in the hand can be wearing gloves.

Dismissal will NOT happen in the usual manner. As the recessional hymn is being sung, please stay patiently in your pew until the Usher dismisses your pew. This will prevent people from bunching up on the way out of church. Once you are dismissed we ask you to proceed as quickly as possible to the exit, because the entire Church needs to be sanitized before the beginning of the next mass. Please do not congregate on the Church lawn, or in the parking lot. Remember we are still supposed to be keeping our distance from one another.

Finally, I wish to offer my profound thanks to all of you who kept sending in your contributions during these trying times, as well as so many of you who offered your support and encouragement through letters, emails, notes, and phone messages. We are truly blessed with a special faith community! Know that my prayers for you continue every day, and hopefully, someday soon, we will be at the end of this crisis.

I remain most affectionately....

Rev. Michael A. Sisco  
Pastor