



Returning to Mass

PROCEDURES & PROTOCOLS FOR RETURNING TO MASS

Effective Saturday, May 23, 2020 Bishop McManus lifted the suspension of public celebrations of the Mass in the Diocese of Worcester. We have resumed the regular Sunday Mass Schedule – Saturday at 4:30 pm and Sunday at 7:30, 9:00 & 11:00 am and 5:30 pm. The 8:30 am daily Mass has also resumed from Monday – Saturday. While we are excited to welcome you back to St. Mary's Church for the celebration of Mass, we also want to ensure the health and safety of all our parishioners. Please familiarize yourselves with these protocols and procedures for returning to Mass at St. Mary's as they have helped to ensure a smooth re-opening.

ATTENDANCE AT MASS

- The suspension of the Sunday obligation to attend Mass on Sundays will remain in force until December 31, 2020.
- Older adults and those with underlying health conditions should continue to avoid public assemblies and remain at home. St. Mary's will continue to record the Sunday Mass each week which can be viewed on Sunday at 8:00 am and 6:00 pm on Shrewsbury Cable Channel 28. The Sunday Mass will also be posted at 8:00 am on the St. Mary's Facebook page @stmarysshrewsburyma and on the parish website www.stmarysparish.org.
- Persons who are feeling sick or exhibiting any of the following symptoms should not attend Mass in person – fever, cough, shortness of breath, chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, or new loss of taste or smell. Persons who have potentially been exposed to someone with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 should not attend.

CAPACITY & SEATING FOR MASS

- During this phase of reopening, our Masses at St. Mary's Church will be limited to approximately 125 people. This is the estimated number of people who can be seated in the church while maintaining 6 feet of distance from others. In order to ensure compliance people will not be allowed to enter the church once we have reached the occupancy limit.

PRIOR TO ARRIVING

- Please wash your hands thoroughly and bring a small bottle of your own hand sanitizer that can be used before receiving Holy Communion.
- Face coverings or masks are required in the parking lot and during Mass. Please note that for children between ages 2 and 5, the wearing of a face covering or mask is at the discretion of the child's parent. Children under the age of 2 should not wear a face covering or mask. Places of worship may refuse entry to a person who refuses to wear a face covering or mask for non-medical reasons.

ARRIVING FOR MASS

- Parishioners may enter the church through the Main Street doors or side doors. A parish volunteer will greet you and assist you in finding a seat if necessary. Please be sure to remain six feet away from the person in front of you. The floor will be marked in order to help maintain social distancing. This process will allow for the easiest and safest entry for all our parishioners.
- Volunteers will help to seat you and your household when you arrive. Those entering through the Main Street doors will be seated in the back half of the church and those entering through the side door will be seated in the front half.



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- Some pews will be roped off in order to maintain social distancing and we appreciate everyone cooperating in sitting in only the open pews.
- Please note, you may be sharing a pew with another household, but social distancing must be maintained between households (6 feet).
- The holy water fonts will remain empty. Hymnals and missalettes have been removed from the pews. There will also be no bulletins available - Please read the bulletin online or call the pastoral center to have one mailed to you.

GENERAL PROCEDURES FOR MASS

- Please keep your face covering or mask on for the duration of Mass.
- There will be no congregational singing during the Mass with the exception of the Gospel Acclamation, Holy Holy, Memorial Acclamation, Great Amen, and Lamb of God. There is to be no physical contact at the Sign of Peace, hand holding during the Lord's Prayer or shaking hands/hugging others after Mass.
- Baskets will not be passed during the offertory. Instead, you will be able to place your weekly gift in a basket as you enter/exit the church.
- We strongly encourage online giving through [WeShare](https://www.stmarysparish.org/weshare) found our parish website www.stmarysparish.org/weshare

PROCEDURES FOR RECEIVING HOLY COMMUNION

- The Precious Blood will not be distributed to the congregation.
- The use of personal hand sanitizer before communion is strongly encouraged.
- There will be two Communion stations - one at the head of the main aisle and one in the middle of the main aisle. There will be one single line for communion. Volunteers will assist in ushering each pew to at the proper time with the "Mary side" (right side) of the church coming first followed by the "pulpit side" (left side) of the church. The main aisle will be marked with tape at 6 foot intervals to help maintain social distancing.
- Masks should be worn while in the communion line. After you have received communion please step to the side, remove your mask, consume the Eucharist, and then re-mask. There is a "public health preference" that those who receive Holy Communion receive in the hand and not on the tongue.

At the end of Mass please exit the church by the same door through which you entered. After leaving the church please do not congregate in the hallways, vestibule or outside, but head directly to your vehicle.

CHURCH CLEANING PROCEDURES

- We will continue to implement cleanliness and sanitization practices, including cleaning pews between every Mass. Parish staff and volunteers will be required to wear face masks, wash hands regularly. Disinfecting bathrooms, door handles, and other frequently touched surfaces will occur throughout the day.

St. Mary's Church has been careful to observe the guidelines issued by the State of Massachusetts and the Bishop of Worcester in the interest of the public health.