



Our Lady of Fatima Catholic Church

4020 Lomas Blvd. NE

Albuquerque, New Mexico 87110

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May 17, 2020

Dear Parishioners of Our Lady of Fatima,

The past two months have been a real trial for all of us as we have responded – and continue to respond - to the reality of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) and its threat to public health. In my letter to you on March 20th, I cited a passage from St. Paul’s letter to the Philippians in which he wrote: “In Christ, who is the source of my strength, I have strength for all things.” Before his Ascension into heaven, Jesus promised that he would be with us “until the end of the age,” so we find comfort in his enduring presence and his grace.

On Wednesday of this week, the governor of our state issued a revised health order that goes into effect tomorrow, Saturday, May 18th, that permits houses of worship to open for services but only at 10% of occupancy capacity as determined by the fire marshal. On Thursday, Archbishop John Wester issued a statement lifting the suspension of public Masses in Catholic parishes effective Saturday, May 18th, subject to the 10% occupancy allowed by the governor’s order. It is very important to note that **the dispensation from Sunday obligation continues to remain in effect for all**. Persons who are sick, have a compromised immune system, or are simply afraid to venture out into the public at this time, have no obligation to attend Mass while the dispensation remains in effect. At Our Lady of Fatima, we will continue to offer the streamed Mass on our parish website for the benefit of those who are unable to attend Mass in person.

Here at Our Lady of Fatima, we will resume our normal weekend Mass schedule tomorrow, Saturday, May 18th. Masses will be at the normal times of 5:30 pm on Saturday, and 7:30 am, 10:00 am and 12:00 noon on Sunday. Because of the occupancy limitations which will limit us to 70 people in the church, we will also be offering Mass in Fatima-Gallagher Hall (FGH) at three of the four Mass times – 5:30 pm on Saturday, and 10:00 am and 12:00 noon on Sunday. The 7:30 am Sunday Mass will only be in the church. Please be very aware that we are limited to 70 people in the church and 30 people in FGH. This is not an option. It is mandated by the health order. If possible, parishioners are asked to bring their own hand sanitizer.

The following points are also very important:

1. Persons may enter and exit through the East door of the church ONLY. No other doors are to be used.
2. Persons will be counted as they enter the church. When we reach the authorized capacity of 70, no more persons will be allowed in the church, though they may attend Mass in FGH if we have not reached capacity in that venue.

3. All persons 3 years of age and older MUST wear a mask/facial covering. This is not an option.
4. There will be a basket near the church door in which you may place your offertory envelope. The collection will not be taken up by the ushers with the baskets on poles.
5. Please sit in designated pews only. Social distancing MUST be observed, maintaining at least 6 feet of separation between persons.
6. Holy water will not be available in the fonts.
7. Missalette has been removed from the pews as the congregation is asked not to sing during Mass (That's a first! Asking Catholics NOT to sing!)
8. There are to be no exchanges of handshakes or other physical greetings.
9. The Priests have been instructed to shorten the length of the Mass in appropriate ways so as to shorten the length of exposure time between persons. For instance, the Archbishop has instructed us to preach for no more than 3 minutes. You will notice other minor changes.
10. Per the guidelines of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Holy Communion will be distributed at the end of Mass as people exit the building. Communion may be received ONLY in the hand at this time. Communion will not be distributed on the tongue. Facial masks may be briefly removed in order to consume the Eucharist, but should be put back on immediately after placing the Host in your mouth.

Please note that the church and FGH will be cleaned after every Mass to help reduce the possibility of transmission of the virus.

Daily Mass will resume on Monday, May 20th, but for the first week or two we will only have Mass at 8:15 am in the church. The 6:30 am Mass will be added at a later date. Daily Mass may also be viewed on the parish website. Morning Mass on Saturdays will remain at 7:30 am.

Drive-up Confessions have been discontinued. Confession will be available in the church at the normal time of 3:30 pm to 5:00 pm on Saturdays. To maintain social distancing, we will not be using the confessionals. Chairs have been set up with a dividing screen between them.

Fr. Chris, the parish staff, and I will continue to serve you – our parish community – to the very best of our ability. Please be patient as we adapt to the current circumstances. May God bless you and keep you safe, and let us pray for one another. For those with internet access, please check the parish website for the latest updates.

Yours in Christ,

Fr. Stephen Schultz

Very Rev. Stephen Schultz
Pastor