

Reopening Church during Coronavirus

Hello Father Luciano here. I am happy, I am very, very happy!

Dear parishioners, Monday June 1st, on the feast day of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church we will start to celebrate our public Masses. Thank you, God!

This is an important and joyful day for our parish and for all our Diocese. Finally, after a long period of restrictions we can start again to receive the Holy Eucharist.

During this time, I received a countless number of emails where people were expressing their desire to participate in the liturgy and receive the Eucharist. Now, it's time.

It is important for all of us to understand that things won't immediately go back to normal. Our Diocese prepared for temporary guidelines to follow scrupulously. In my opinion, the guidelines are not easy to follow, because we are being asked to change our normal routine when attending Mass, moreover all parishioners are asked to be involved by volunteering. They are demanding guidelines for the benefit of our parish community. The list below indicates what we need to keep in mind every time we come to church. I listed just a few points. If you are interested in seeing the Diocesan document in full you can check on the St. James Parish website or on the Diocese of Calgary website.

As I said above, the guidelines we received from the Diocese could be not easy to follow, because every single Mass (daily Masses and weekend Masses), requires a group of volunteers in charge of different tasks before and after every Mass.

For example, **Ushers** (2 – 4) volunteers, depends on the number of attending Mass; **Point of Entry** (2) volunteers, ask health questions and sign people in for mass; **Cleaners** (2 – 4) volunteers, after every Mass this group has to disinfect all pews;

Without one of these groups Mass will be cancelled. Now, you know what I mean that following the Diocesan guidelines could be hard, but not impossible if everybody gives time as a volunteer.

Other very important points:

- 1) The dispensation of the faithful from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass remains in place until decreed otherwise by the Bishop.
- 2) Church will be open 30 minutes before Mass starts, coming in from the main entrance. During the celebration the church will be locked.
- 3) No more than 50 people are allowed to participate at every single Mass, this includes the priest and the volunteers.
- 4) All parishioners are expected to wear their own non-medical mask, for the entire time in the building.
- 5) All parishioners are invited to sanitize their hands immediately at the entrance of the church.
- 6) At the door, the point of entry team will check your name on the list and will ask you some questions. If your name is not on the list, if you do not have your own non-medical mask, if you will show any symptoms of sickness such as cough, cold or similar, you will not be able to attend.
- 7) One of the ushers will show you to your seat. You may not be able to sit in your favorite pew.

- 8) All social gatherings are prohibited in the church.
- 9) For the entire time you are in the worship building, you are to practice physical distancing (6 feet or 2 metres).
- 10) Infants and children should remain with their parents or guardians at all times.
- 11) No music for all Masses (daily and Sunday). So, no songs during Mass and during the adoration of the Holy Sacrament.
- 12) The acclamation of the Gospel will be by the priest, saying Alleluia! Alleluia! and the answer by the congregation, saying Alleluia! Alleluia! with the mask on.
- 13) During the time of the distribution of the Holy Eucharist you have to follow the instructions of the ushers and practice physical distancing.
- 14) The Holy Communion will be distributed only by the priest.
- 15) The individual attestation (“The Body of Christ, R: Amen”) during the Holy Communion is eliminated. Before we begin to distribute Communion, this point will be replaced by one general pronouncement, the priest from the altar will say, (“The Body of Christ”) and one general response by the congregation (“Amen”).
- 16) Temporarily, for the common good, Communion will not be distributed on the tongue, but on the hand.
- 17) At the end of Mass, all the attendants will be invited to leave the building through the East door by the Virgin Mary statue. An Usher will guide you. It is suggested that you park on the east side of the church.
- 18) At the exit, one of the ushers will have a basket for you to give your offering.

As I said at the beginning, we would like to begin our masses on the feast day of the Blessed Virgin Mary by having 4 masses on Monday, June 1st (2 in Okotoks and 2 in Black Diamond). In order for this to happen, we need our volunteers to sign up immediately for at least the first full week (June 1st – June 7th). You can do so by:

- a) Signing up online ([St. James Parish Website](http://St.JamesParishWebsite))
- b) Calling the Parish Office (403.938.3122)
- c) Emailing the Parish Office (office@stjamesparishrc.com)

Training of volunteers is scheduled for Saturday, May 30th @ 1:00pm. Once we have our volunteers in place, we will send out instructions on how to register to attend mass.

No one should expect that they will be safer in church than in any other public space. Please keep in mind we will all experience challenges and frustration as we navigate through this. The parish will not be able to accommodate everyone at a particular Mass, therefore please be mindful of others who will want to attend. Based on the fact that we normally see 1100 people on the weekend and are now limited to 300 with 6 masses, we suggest you plan on attending one weekend per month. We are increasing our weekend masses by adding a 5pm Saturday evening mass in Black Diamond to accommodate as many people possible.

As a priest, this is new to me and has given me many sleepless nights. So, I am asking you to be open minded and collaborative as part of our Parish community. Together we will get through this, and I will sleep again!

God Bless you and your family.
Peace, Father Luciano