

May 8, 2020: Where to Begin?

The guidance we have received from the archdiocesan Office of Worship regarding open up our sacred space for prayer and worship is to ease into it. Going from not having any public Masses to a full-blown celebration of the Eucharist as we have been accustomed to it in the past is too big a step to take all at once. A better approach is to take modest, sustainable steps, do an assessment, and then continue or adjust as necessary. Some things are pretty clear-cut: if we are to abide by the social distancing guidelines of the CDC we will have to address the tendency to congregate in the pews in the back of church and spread out more evenly. We can do that by roping off pews as needed to ensure compliance with this directive.

Other things that will help include:

- Opening the church for private prayer and devotion during the week so that people at least have the opportunity for encountering the Lord in a meaningful way in sacred space dedicated to that purpose;
- resumption of pastoral care, especially the sacrament of penance and reconciliation, for those who want to avail themselves of that grace;
- celebrating the Eucharist on weekdays, where social distancing can be maintained more easily, and getting a feel for how to do that at the Sunday Eucharist where more people are involved;
- making it possible for communion to be brought to those who are unable to come to church because of the risks involved.

Thinking through all the parameters involved in moving from the simple solution of locking up the church to something less absolute is a daunting task. A lot of questions still remain unanswered. In the meantime, what has been available these past several weeks is still available:

- The dispensation of the obligation to attend Sunday Mass is still in place. If the risk of attending still seems too great, you are free to remain at home. There is no sin in that.
- The Mass will still be available on social media;
- We are still committed to praying for one another and remaining in contact with one another by the means still available.

We are truly in a new environment here. There will be some changes that will have to become permanent. But God will provide. He always does. And so we place our trust in him and move forward as we are able.