

PUBLIC MASSES RETURN TO SAINT BENEDICT PARISH

We are being encouraged by the archdiocese to take a calculated risk and return to offering Mass with the public present. To reduce the risk as much as possible the parish staff and I have worked on a series of steps to help us maintain social distancing, be mindful of the needs of others, and do what we can to form as vibrant a worshipping community as possible under these difficult conditions.

By way of a reminder, Archbishop Thompson has extended the dispensation from the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days until August 15th. This dispensation recognizes that some parishioners have ongoing health conditions that preclude them from returning to Mass for the foreseeable future. It also recognizes the concerns other parishioners have about putting themselves or their families at risk of contracting a serious viral infection. As a result, I would like to remind you again not to return to Mass if you are not comfortable doing so, if you are aged sixty-five or older, and especially if you are in a high-risk category regardless of your age. (Per the CDC, "at-risk" health conditions include but are not limited to high blood pressure, chronic lung disease, diabetes, asthma, those whose immune system is compromised such as by chemotherapy for cancer and other conditions requiring such therapy.) Mass will continue to be live-streamed from our website and on YouTube for those who are remaining at home.

If you do plan to attend Mass, please plan to arrive fifteen minutes prior to its starting time so that there is time enough for everyone to be seated properly. Those attending the later Mass on Sunday, please do not arrive any earlier than thirty minutes prior to Mass so as not to interfere with the required cleaning/disinfection process taking place between the Masses.

WE ARE ASKING YOU TO PLEASE WEAR A MASK AT MASS: Please wear your mask from the time you exit your vehicle until you return. (The mask is to be removed only for the reception of Holy Communion.) If you do not have a mask, masks will be available at the entrances of the church.

Here's a step-by-step guide for participating at Mass at St. Ben's:

ENTERING THE BUILDING: Please enter church at the doors of the north and south handi-capped ramps. These do not require the use of hands to be opened. The main doors will be open, but only to exit the church. Please maintain a six-foot distance from individuals or families in front of you. Persons living in the same household are exempt from the six-foot distance requirement. Once the church's capacity has been reached, signs will be placed outside each door alerting you to that fact and containing information about when the next Mass will take place, even if it is not until the following day.

SOCIAL DISTANCING: Inside the church, all of the aisles have 6" circles with gold crosses placed every six feet. These will help you maintain social distancing whenever you have to move about the church.

PERSONAL SANITIZER: We will have hand sanitizer available at the entrances of the church, but you are encouraged to bring your own. We suggest you use it once seated, prior to receiving Holy Communion, immediately after Holy Communion and once you return to your vehicle.

HOLY COMMUNION: While in line, please maintain six feet distance between yourself and others who are not part of your household. Leave your mask in place until you approach the minister. We will not be distributing communion on the tongue. If you feel uncomfortable receiving communion in the hand, please feel free to remain in your pew and make a spiritual communion. To receive the host, please cup your hands lightly, and hold them steady until the communion minister drops the host into your hand. Then, step aside, consume the sacred host and replace your mask before returning to your seat.

COLLECTION: Your support of our parish is greatly needed and appreciated. There will be a basket at the foot of the altar to receive your contribution/envelope. There will be no collection by passing the basket or offertory procession.

DISMISSAL: Out of respect and courtesy for all in attendance, please do not leave Mass prior to the final blessing and dismissal. The ushers will assist in this process. At all times during exiting and going to vehicles we ask you (and your family) to maintain a minimum of six feet distance from other persons. Please do not congregate once Mass is over.

Until we know how much time we will need between the Sunday Masses to sanitize the church, the **MASS SCHEDULE** will be as follows:

Saturday at 5:30

Sunday at 8:00 and 11:30

I appreciate all the efforts you have made to continue forming our faith community. I've been amazed, humbled and edified by all the support that's been shown—to me personally and to the parish in general. This, too, shall pass, right? Let's keep praying for a permanent solution to the crisis and especially for all who are being affected by it quite profoundly.

God's peace be with you all!

Fr. Martin