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May 26, 2020

Dear parishioners of St. Patrick and St. Charles,

Greetings in Christ!

Earlier in May, our bishop created comprehensive directives divided into phases in order to guide our parishes to reopen in the safest manner possible. Shortly after the bishop's directives were released, a St. Patrick/St. Charles "task force" was formed in order to digest, interpret, and implement the bishop's document at our parishes. The task force was comprised of medical professionals, cleaning volunteers, ushers, and educators from both parishes. I am grateful for their collaboration.

This coming weekend (May 30/31) is the first weekend that public Masses are permitted. I wish to remind you: we are doing our best! Please be patient as we work through this unprecedented situation. Remember, the following procedures do not eliminate the possibility of exposure. We are merely trying to minimize the risk. And we fully realize that some might be turned away when the church reaches capacity. Be aware of this possibility, and know that it may be impossible for everyone to attend Mass each weekend. If you indicated in the parish survey your willingness to volunteer for cleaning or medical, you will be contacted soon (if you haven't been already!)

For those of you who choose not to return to Mass quite yet, rest assured that we will continue to film a Mass each weekend and put it on our parish website, as usual. **We will return to having a weekly bulletin, which you can also access on our website.** I encourage you to read it each weekend, as it will include articles, schedules, and other resources for you and your family.

I ask you to please read to the very end of this letter to be prepared for the weekend. (I've also attached Bishop Doherty's full document, if you are interested.)

Details of Weekend Masses

While some parishes have such a demand that they have resorted to online reservation systems, we have determined (through the results of our survey) that we will not require reservations at this time.

- We urge you to arrive at least 10 minutes early to Mass, as the seating process will take a little more time than in the past.

- Anyone 65 or older, immune suppressed or fearful of contact of COVID-19 is asked to please stay home, as the obligation to attend Sunday Mass has been dispensed by Bishop Doherty until August 15, 2020. However, if you are 65 or older but still wish to

come to Mass, the 5:30pm Saturday Vigil Mass is especially designated for them to attend.

- Per diocesan directives, there will be **no music or singing until at least mid-June**.

- The Church building and social hall bathrooms will be thoroughly cleaned, disinfected, and sanitized every week. The church and bathrooms will be sanitized between each Mass, as well.

- **Masks** will be required at each Mass. ***We urge you to bring your own!*** We will have a few on hand, in case you don't have a mask or forget it at home.

- **Hand sanitizer** will be available at the entrance of the Church for application before and after Mass. If you wish to have sanitizer with you in the pew, please bring your own personal sanitizer.

- **Ushers will seat you** to ensure proper social distancing. Families will be seated together as much as possible.

- **We will have limited seating**; once we reach capacity, we will have to ask any overage to leave. Mass times at other area churches will be suggested to them. Please keep this risk in mind!

- The priest and seminarians will process into Mass simply from the sacristy.

- The duties of lector and altar server will be fulfilled by the seminarians assigned to our parishes for the summer months.

- ***Reception of the Eucharist will take place after the final blessing and after Mass has concluded.*** The priest will briefly wash his hands in the sacristy before returning to distribute Holy Communion. You will be released one pew at a time by ushers.

- ***The priest will wear a mask at the time of distribution of Holy Communion.***

- You are free (and encouraged) to leave immediately after receiving Holy Communion. You are highly encouraged to pray a prayer of thanksgiving in your car as a family for the gift of the Eucharist (a suggested prayer will be printed on the front of the bulletin.)

- The basket for the offertory collection will be near the entrance of the Church. Envelopes should be dropped in the basket either as you enter or exit the Church.

Weekday Masses: according to diocesan directives, Masses on weekdays will not be public at least through early July.

Home Communion Visits: In the coming weeks, we will be attempting to schedule Communion visits to those parishioners 65 and over who do not feel safe returning to public Mass.

Confessions: *I must keep my promise* to offer an hour of Confessions for every week our churches have been closed. It will have been 12 weeks of closure when our church is finally permitted to hold scheduled confessions on June 6th. To keep my word, I will be offering six hours of Confession at each parish. Confessions will be heard on ***Saturday, June 6th, 10am-4pm, in the St. Patrick's church sacristy.*** Cars will form a line around the back of church, so that you can pull up to the door of the sacristy with your car facing east. I will also hold Confessions on ***Monday, June 8th, 3-9pm, on the front porch of the St. Charles rectory.*** In a similar manner, cars will form a line facing east on the lane that runs to the south of the rectory. In both places, seminarians will be present to direct the line and to provide materials on how to go to Confession. Regularly scheduled confessions at both churches will resume after June 8th. Separate appointments can also be made through calling the parish office or e-mailing Fatherhaan@gmail.com.

We still must wait to schedule our parish Confirmations, First Holy Communions, and when our RCIA candidates receive the Sacraments of Initiation until we enter the next phases of the Bishop's directives, hopefully in a few short weeks. We will keep you posted!

Your patience and understanding are deeply appreciated. May God bless you and your family this summer, and please feel free to call the parish office with any questions, concerns, or suggestions you may have. And as always- if you or someone you know are in need of assistance, whether it be running errands, yard work, or financial, please let us know in the parish office.

Under the Mercy,

Father Haan