

Dear Members of St. John the Apostle Parish:

May 26, 2020

Greetings to all of you on this beautiful day! I write to provide information and guidance related to the expected reopening of the Church for public Masses starting this Saturday, May 30, 2020.

The guidance from the State and Diocese, in Phase 1 reopening, allows for us to celebrate Masses with attendance of up to 50% of our seating capacity (the Church seating capacity is 1233) so this would be 616 people: however, in light of the health distancing recommendations and spacing...our capacity limit in the Church will be 200, with an additional overflow seating in the Parish Center Auditorium (only at the 9am and 11am Masses) of about 70 seats: you are asked to follow the directions of the ushers with regard to seating and communion for Mass. During the various reopening phases, in order to more easily comply with the distancing and other protocols, all daily and Sunday Masses will be held in the Church until further notice. The Mass schedule will be as follows (again all in the Church):

- 1) Daily Mass: Monday---Friday: 8:30am; Saturday: 9am.
- 2) Weekend Mass Schedule:
 - a. Saturday evening Vigil Mass: 5:30pm
 - b. Sunday Masses:
 - i. 7:00am, 9:00am, 11:00am, 1:00pm.
 - ii. 3:00pm Spanish Mass
 - iii. 5:00pm Latin Mass (subject to cancelation if a priest celebrant cannot make it).

With regard to attendance at Mass: during the initial reopening phases the Bishop is continuing to suspend the "obligation to attend Mass on Sunday" for all, particularly those who are most vulnerable to this virus (anyone over 65, anyone with ongoing health or medical issues)...these individuals should not attend public Mass, but continue to join us via 'live-streaming video' (which we will continue to provide during the reopening period at the 9am, 11am, and 3pm (Spanish) Masses on Sundays) on the parish website and Facebook site. We also emphasize that anyone who feels unwell should stay home, and anyone who feels uncomfortable or afraid to attend larger public gatherings should likewise participate via the 'live-streaming video' or recording. Please note that, starting on May 30th, we will no longer be 'live-streaming/recording' the daily Mass.

For those planning to attend public Mass once again, while we are indeed desirous for everyone to gather together, we know that we will, obviously, not be able to accommodate more than the capacity we have established for the reopening phases; once that number is reached at any given Mass....we will not be allowing any more people into the Church. In light of these gathering limitations we ask that people try to spread out/vary their attendance to all of the scheduled Mass times and not concentrate only on the more popular Mass times exclusively (namely 9am and 11am)...understanding, patience, and cooperation on the part of all will make this easier for everyone.

We will be making every effort to wipe down and disinfect doors, pews, etc....between Masses. Additionally, for the promotion of health and safety, these elements of the Mass will be suspended until further notice: (processions, congregational singing, offertory procession, sign of peace, greetings after Mass). We will have a fixed offertory basket put inside the main entrance of the Church for people to place offertory envelopes and donations in (rather than passing baskets as we usually do) when they

arrive or before departing. Those attending Mass are expected to wear a cloth face covering or disposable face mask: please bring your own as the parish is not in a position to provide masks or any other protective items to those who attend Mass. You are expected to disinfect your hands before entering the church & encouraged to do so again immediately before receiving Communion. Owing to the challenge to obtain, and maintain, a sufficient supply of hand sanitizer (and sanitizer stations) you are asked to please bring your own hand sanitizer.

The distribution of Holy Communion during the “reopening phases” will be affected as follows:

1. The Diocese suppresses the distribution of the Precious Blood until further notice.
2. Only priests, deacons, & instituted acolytes are to distribute Communion.
3. All present who are in a state of grace may receive Communion. Those who have health concerns are not obliged.
4. Please follow the guidance of the ushers for the distribution of Communion and maintain health distancing in the Communion Procession.
5. You are encouraged to disinfect your hands immediately before receiving Communion.
6. You retain the right to decide how to receive, whether on the tongue or in the hand. Please prayerfully consider temporarily receiving reverently in the hand.
7. It is not permitted to receive Communion in the hand while wearing gloves. If you are wearing gloves and will receive Communion in the hand, please remove your gloves for the reception of Communion.
8. The Ministers (priest/acolytes) will have disinfectant wipes on hand and will look to wipe their fingers if any contact is made with a communicant’s hand or tongue .

The priests still respond to emergency calls for the sick and the dying.... seeking to bring the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick and Viaticum to parishioners...when and where we are able to given the current circumstances and restrictions; all other Communion calls are suspended until further notice.

We have continued to hold funerals and/or graveside liturgies for our parishioners who have died...adhering to gathering restrictions and other protocols; and this will continue to be the case as things reopen.

We will continue to celebrate Confessions in the Parish Center, as we have since the outset of this Pandemic; with the times being on Wednesdays from 6:30pm until the lines are done, and on Saturdays from 4pm until the lines are done (the priest celebrant of the 530pm Mass will have to depart at 5pm to prepare for Mass): the confessional lines form outside of the Parish Center entrance... and access is monitored/controlled by one of our seminarians (and likely future volunteers once the seminarians depart).

We continue to discuss how and when to reopen Eucharistic Adoration in the Chapel with the coordinators of that Ministry: we are canvassing the current adoration roster to see who can/cannot,

will/will not be able to participate in adoration and take time slots once we restart: likely we will have to begin with a modified schedule while we work to rebuild/strengthen that ministry with new participants, etc.: more updates on this reopening will be provided going forward.

The Parish Staff (most of whom have been on administrative leave and continue to work remotely, etc.) will be back in the office on 5/29...but as we will need a few days to get settled back in and caught up on things...we will be aiming to open up the office to the public on 6/3/20. With regard to opening up the rest of the Parish facilities and starting up group activities; we anticipate doing this more gradually, as we still need to discuss various practicalities and protocols, etc....with the staff and other program coordinators: so further information will also be forthcoming on these matters.

The staff and I will be in discussion, during their first week back, about planning and rescheduling the various Sacraments that were postponed during the time of closure (Baptisms, Weddings, First Communions, RCIA Sacraments) and we will be communicating with those affected by the postponements...and get new dates/times scheduled in the coming weeks (again we ask for your patience as we work to accomplish this... there are a lot of things to be reworked and rescheduled)...this rescheduling will be a top priority for us.

In closing I ask for everyone's patience and support as our parish moves into this re-opening period; there are bound to be some bumps in the road and a few unexpected twists and turns...but I am confident that we will be able to make a go of all of this...even while trying to maintain, as best we can under the present circumstances, the health and safety of all concerned. Please know of my sincere thanks for the many kindnesses so many of you have shown to us over these past weeks and months, and for the tremendous and generous support so many have continued to give to the parish! I rejoice that we will soon be able to come together to celebrate the Eucharist and the other Sacraments...and I look forward to seeing you and being with you and your families in our Church.

Blessings and Peace;

Fr. Kevin