

Change of COVID-19 Protocols

St. John Neumann Parish Yuma Az

Pastor's Message

When I first heard about Covid-19 I would have never guessed almost a year later our lives would remain disrupted. I am exceedingly proud of the way our St. John Neumann Parish community has handled this pandemic. It is a great testimony to our faith in God and the trust He will give us the grace we need to overcome any challenges we may face. The current and improving data are providing hope that better times are on the horizon. The data is also providing the opportunity to slowly decrease some of the restrictive protocols that have been necessary to protect the public in general and our parishioners in particular.

I am happy to announce some changes to the Covid-19 protocols which will help to begin the road back to a more normal operation of our parish. The CDC data our Dioceses uses to establish a safe environment necessary to protect the life and health of our parishioners have improved. Bishop Weisenberger has informed me that we can cautiously decrease some of the protocols which have proved very effective in protecting our parishioners and the public in general. This will take effect no earlier than October 10, 2020.

The pandemic remains active and dangerous, so I urge you to remain at home if there is **any** question regarding your current health or risk level. If you feel even slightly ill or out of sorts, please **STAY HOME**. This applies to parishioners, clergy, staff, ministers, and volunteers. Bishop Weisenberger's dispensation of the Sunday Mass obligation remains in effect. If there is any question, staying at home is the proper moral decision.

Those in the vulnerable classification (age 65+ or with a chronic health condition) are strongly urged to remain at home and not come onto parish property

There is an inherent risk, regardless of age or health, in attending any public event. This includes religious services. While we are working to reduce the risk, there are no risk-free situations. A parishioner's presence at a public event constitutes his or her understanding and acceptance of this essential level of risk.

Should we reach the point when the church is at maximum seating our ushers will post signage to that affect.

Our efforts to use technology during the pandemic has been well received and effective. We will continue to use and improve this media to offer spiritual assistance and communicate with as many of you as is possible.

I want to take a moment to thank all of you who have continued to support our parish financially. You have made a difficult situation more manageable, and may God Bless you for it. Collection baskets will be located so that offerings can be made without physical contact.

General Information

The Diocese of Tucson is currently following the recommendations of the *Centers for Disease Control*. St. John Neumann, as a part of the Tucson Diocese, will be guided by diocesan policy.

We continue to have a special concern for those more vulnerable due to age, over 65, or secondary health issues. The status of the pandemic can change quickly. The risk of COVID-19 remains substantial, and Phase 2 of the reopening plan may be updated at any time, depending on circumstances.

Phase 2

General Instructions

- Sunday Mass will continue with maximum seating of one-third (1/3) of pew space and social distancing between persons not living in the same household. There is to be no physical contact. This precludes any social gatherings between households before or after Mass or other celebrations.
- Distribution of Holy Communion may take place at its normal place in the Mass. Priests in good health, but over the age of 65, may distribute Holy Communion personally. All those distributing Holy Communion must be masked and use generous amounts of hand sanitizer. Holy Communion for those viewing through technology and those who are unable to attend will be made available

- For the immediate future, Holy Communion will only be given in the hand (The may change in the next phase of reopening protocols)
- We will be using a disinfectant to clean the pews, and bathrooms to the extent we can. However, no method is completely effective, so make every effort to avoid touching common areas.
- The use of a mask is mandatory for all those age six and older. Multiple public experts have stressed the effectiveness and benefits of the use of masks. It is a critical way to protect the most vulnerable among us and is unquestionably a pro-life issue. Bishop Weisenburger has said that the use of a mask is an especially strong sign of your support for your priests and other ministers.
- Congregational singing, as well as full choir singing, remains prohibited. However, the use of one or two cantors and instrumentalists with a maximum social distancing from one another is acceptable.
- Daily Mass may resume, however, only in the main Church with all safety measures in place, (the use of masks and social distancing).
- Deacons under the age of 65, in good health and with no chronic health problems, may resume their ministry observing all standard protocols. Deacons over the age of 65 and with no chronic health problems may resume their ministry at their discretion and in consultation with their pastor.
- Parish bulletins will be available AFTER Mass and must not be left behind in the church. You are encouraged to read and print the bulletin online.
- Funerals and weddings will follow the same protocols as Sunday Masses, observing the maximum seating of the church
- Baptisms are limited to twenty (20) persons. Critical to the celebration of a baptism during this phase is social distancing during the celebration. It has been observed repeatedly that celebrations involving persons well known to one another (families at weddings, baptisms,

first-communions, etc.) are occasions with a far greater chance of a breakdown in social distancing, etc. The celebrant of Baptism should instruct the family ahead of time as to the importance of social distancing. Outdoor baptisms (on parish property) are permitted at this time

- Confessions will be offered only in our main church with masks, and social distancing observed.
- At some point, Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament will be allowed on Friday after daily Mass for one hour with people remaining in the seat they occupied for Mass. They must continue to use masks.
- Confirmation will remain delegated to pastors and are to follow the protocols of Sunday Mass
- Quinceaneras will follow the same protocols as Sunday Masses, with no public celebratory gatherings before or after the celebration at the entrance to the church. Parish facilities will not be available to rent at this time for celebrations.
- Holy water will not be placed in the fonts; individuals may ask for Holy Water to be blessed for their homes.
- Parish meetings are to be held through technology and in-person only by exception. In-person must be with all participants outside the “at-risk” category, and all must follow social distancing protocols and use masks.
- We thank you for your support, and collection baskets will be provided for you to drop your offering into without any physical contact.
- Please keep a **6 to 10-foot distance** between non-family members on all church property both indoors and outdoors.
- Please use hand sanitizer and wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds before arriving for mass and upon returning home.

- Please **DO NOT** congregate or socialize before or after mass

The Mass

- Beginning on October 10, 2020, The Sunday Mass will be allowed from Friday thru Monday.
 - Our current schedule is as follows:
 - **Saturday 4:00 pm - Church**
 - **Sunday 10:00 am - Church**
 - **Sunday 11:30 am Spanish - Church**
 - Daily Mass beginning on October 12, 2020
 - **Monday – Friday 9:00 am - Church**
 - This schedule is open to change as we determine the needs of the parish and the most efficient schedule.
- There is to be **NO** physical contact at the “Sign of Peace, during The Lord’s Prayer or at any time during the Liturgy
- There will be no use of hymnals, and congregational singing is suspended. (Singing allows for an enormous number of contagion droplets to be dispersed into the air)

Holy Communion

- The Eucharist is to be received **ONLY** in the hand, and only the Body of Christ will be distributed.
- Please place one hand over the other and form a cup to allow the Eucharistic Minister to give you the Host without physical contact.
- The Eucharist will be distributed at the usual time
- While in line for the Eucharist spacing of 6 to 10 feet is always to be kept and please follow the usher’s instructions
- Again, please make every effort not to have hand to hand contact with the Eucharistic Minister

In Christian love, we must consider how our actions could affect our brothers and sisters. Therefore we must be aware of the potential risks of resuming any public activity, even the practice of our faith.

You are all in my prayers and will remain so, please keep me and each other in your prayers as we manage this hopefully, once in a lifetime experience together.

God Bless,

Fr. George