

May 15, 2020

My Dear Brothers and Sisters:

On March 13 Bishop Medley informed the pastors that we may again celebrate public Masses on Wednesday, May 20. There are specific guidelines and adequate assistance and supplies which must be followed. Many wonderful people from both parishes have stepped up to fulfill the requirements. I am most grateful for their care and work. Because of them I can proudly tell the Bishop, and you, that we can open both parishes for Masses again on May 20.

You will find with my letter, the Bishop's letter to you, as well as a Question and Answer sheet the diocese shared. This clearly explains how we are to gather and celebrate Mass. This Sunday afternoon, May 17, there will be posted on our Face Book page and both web sites a quick walk thru for each parish explaining how we will implement the Bishop's directives. I hope you will find this helpful.

Remember, even though public Masses will start you are not obliged to attend. Bishop Medley says clearly, the dispensation from attending Mass is still in place. In fact, he and I encourage everyone who are vulnerable, uncomfortable, or have children who cannot wear the face masks to not attend. The number of people attending Mass is limited and the parish halls have been set to accommodate an overflow with live streaming from church (if we have enough ushers/greeters). Live stream Masses will continue, and the streaming of daily Masses will begin on the 20th. I still have not worked out which weekend Mass/Masses will be lived streamed. I will let you know when the decision is made.

Attending Mass to fulfill the obligation of Sunday can be done on any of the Masses throughout the week. *For those who like to attend both the weekday Masses and a weekend Mass, please consider at the start to just attend on the weekdays to allow visitors at the lakes to attend on the weekend.*

We will return to our normal schedule, barring any issues:

St. Henry: **Tuesday** 8:00 a.m. **Thursday** 8:00 a.m. **Saturday** 4:00 p.m. **Sunday** 10:30 p.m.

St Stephen: **Wednesday 9:00 a.m. Friday** Noon **Saturday** 6:30 p.m. **Sunday** 8:00 a.m.

The Bishop says at this time Eucharistic Adoration will not reopen. First Friday and First Saturday Masses will return to St. Stephen.

Confession will be available after Masses get underway. Due to my health I need a larger open space where I can meet for confession, and not have others enter and upset the privacy of confession. I have several ideas in mind and will share this when I can.

The parish phone trees will start on Monday contacting every parishioner to see how you are doing, see if you have any questions as we re-open Masses and to see if you might attend a Mass and which one. This is crucial so that we can ensure everyone who comes to Mass can attend. You will also be asked if you would be open to attend another Mass if one is full.

There are several conditions which may cancel our Masses. If there are not enough greeters/ushers, lectors, or Extraordinary Ministers of Communion, a Mass will be canceled. **I am also awaiting a response from my doctor to approve my celebrating Mass with the precautions** I have in place. I am hopeful he will approve and that you will honor the things I must do to protect myself.

During these past months people are all over the board emotionally in their thoughts about the handling of the pandemic. If you are upset or angry about the changes being made at Mass, I encourage you not to attend. Everyone needs to follow the new protocol. If you are not able to, that is understandable. There must be compliance for me to have Mass.

If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact me.

Please continue your prayers for our parishes and our members and for dealing with the pandemic. May the scientists be blessed with wisdom and right judgement. May we be rooted in God's love and peace.

Blessings,

Fr. Greg