

Dear Parishioners,

I would like to provide you with some updates on the plans for the resumption of weekend Masses this upcoming Pentecost weekend. First of all, there is no need to sign up in order to attend the weekend Masses. I am confident that with the number of Masses provided, the seating capacity of the Churches, and our typical Sunday Mass attendance, we will be able to provide seating for most everyone while still maintaining the necessary social distancing.

At St. Mary's in Silver Bay, this means that we will be resuming the regular weekend Mass schedule of Saturday evenings at 7:15pm and Sunday mornings at 8:30am. Again, the required limit of 25% of the fire code capacity of the upstairs portion of the Church amounts to over 100 people, which we rarely have at any weekend Mass, even in the summer. Just in case, I have had rows of chairs set up in the social hall so that overflow attendance may be seated there. Holy Communion will be provided to those who may have had to watch Mass on the projector screen in the social hall. But I don't envision that the overflow space in the social hall will need to be used much, if ever, for weekend Masses.

At Holy Spirit in Two Harbors, the limit capacity will be 90 persons in the Church upstairs at any one time. Since our weekend Mass attendance is typically higher than 180 persons (the two masses combined), besides resuming our regularly scheduled Saturday evening 4:30pm Mass, and our Sunday morning 11:00am Mass, I have added a 2:00pm Mass on Sunday afternoons for the time being. For now, there is no need to sign up to attend Mass at Holy Spirit either. Similar to St. Mary's, chairs have been set up in the social hall so that overflow attendees will be seated in the social hall where they can participate in Mass by watching the live-stream, and Holy Communion will be brought to them after Mass concludes. The parish staff and I will be noting the attendance at each of the three Masses and will come up with plans of how to spread people out more equitably over the three Masses if necessary. However, Holy Spirit parishioners, I would recommend that you consider arriving at Church for Mass a bit early, so as to secure the seating that you would prefer. Knowing that tourist season is upon us, it's quite possible that overflow seating in the social hall will need to be used.

I would like to remind everyone that the obligation to attend Sunday Mass remains lifted. No one is required to go to Sunday Mass at this time. Perhaps, in order to alleviate some of the higher numbers of attendance, some of you may wish to go to daily Mass during the week once or twice, and then watch the live-stream of the Mass at home on Sundays. Again, for those of you who are at higher risk of serious health difficulties from this virus due to you having underlying health conditions, or due to age, I urge you to consider staying home.

If you do come to Mass on Sundays, please note a few things. First of all, the wearing of masks or other cloth facial coverings is highly encouraged. Second, hand sanitizer will be available at all entries to the Church for your use. Third, the protocols that we are to follow will be posted on parish bulletin boards for your reference. Fourth, the Church will be cleaned and sanitized after every Mass for your health and safety. Fifth, congregational singing will not be permitted temporarily. I encourage you instead to simply listen to the beautiful music that will be played and sung by our organist and cantor, and immerse yourself in the beauty of sacred music (please note that there will not be music at the 2:00pm Sunday Mass at Holy Spirit). Sixth, Holy

Communion will be distributed immediately after Mass concludes (after the closing hymn finishes). This will allow time for those who wish to attend Mass, but are not yet comfortable coming forward for Holy Communion to quietly depart, and those wishing to receive Holy Communion will simply remain standing in place in their pews. After receiving Holy Communion, please return to your pew, because there will be a brief period of silence for personal prayer, followed by a closing prayer and blessing after which you will be dismissed.

Finally, I would like to remind everyone that the live-stream of the Mass each weekend will continue to be conducted. However, I have decided that the principle live-stream for each Sunday will be the 8:30am Sunday morning Mass which takes place at St. Mary's Church in Silver Bay. The reason for this is twofold. First, due to the shorter and smaller dimensions of St. Mary's Church, the carpeting on the floor, and better microphone system, the sound quality of the live-stream recordings from St. Mary's is much higher. This is important to consider, because for those watching at home, sound quality is critical so that they can easily follow along with the celebration of the Mass. Second, if I were to alternate the location of the live-stream each weekend, that would mean that the live-streamed Mass would be occurring at a different time each weekend, and I would rather have the live-stream be consistent from Sunday to Sunday, so that it is easy to remember. Therefore, the live-stream Mass each weekend from now on will be the 8:30am Sunday morning Mass from St. Mary's.

Confessions continue to be heard at the regularly scheduled times (**Holy Spirit:** Fridays from 7:30am - 8:00am and Saturdays from 3:30pm - 4:15pm; **St. Mary's:** Saturdays from 6:30pm – 7:00pm and Sundays from 7:50am – 8:15am), but in their temporary locations: confessions at Holy Spirit will be heard in the classroom in the education center, and confessions at St. Mary's will be heard in the cry room in the back of the Church.

I know that this is an uncertain and strange time of transition for us as a Church and a society, but I also believe that it is a hopeful time! I look forward to seeing you all sooner or later. Until then, God bless you, and as always, if you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me!

In Christ,

Fr. Steve Laflamme