

Dear friends in Jesus Christ,

I hope and pray that you all are doing well and staying healthy. Let us thank God always for His love, care and protection and many other blessings, especially in these challenging times. We are also grateful to God that we are able to reopen our churches and have public celebration of the Eucharist though with limited numbers. What a joy it would be to see you all in person. I know that it is the desire of everyone of you to be able to gather as a believing community in the Holy Mass. I sincerely thank all of you for your love, patience and cooperation, for your generosity and for joining us in the live streaming of the mass.

As you all know that we are in the phase 2 which allows us to gather for public worship in the church at 25% capacity. We are not ready to start the mass this weekend since we need to plan in such a way that we provide the highest standard of safety for people. We need more volunteers and they need to undergo training so that they are able to have better knowledge for the better service. We also need to make a Parish Re-Opening Plan based on the directives and guidelines given by the Archdiocese and the state and get the approval from the Chancery. We must have final authorization from the Chancery before initiating the celebration of public Mass. We already sent the Parish Re-Opening Plan to the chancery and we are waiting for the approval. We hope to reopen our church for public mass next Sunday.

In order to reopen our church for public mass we need to follow the directives and guidelines provided by the state and the chancery. These guidelines will remain in force until further notice or changes by the State allow for or require revision. It is important to remember that these directives and guidelines are not intended to be permanent adjustments to normal practice but temporary responses to the pandemic.

Reopening will not mean an immediate return to our normality. We need to follow the guidelines and safety measures when we come to church for mass. You will be receiving the instructions soon but still I would like to mention some of the important things. The first thing is that we all need to be charitable, responsible and understanding as parish faithful.

- A general dispensation from the Sunday Mass obligation will remain in place.
- Anyone attending Mass does so at their own risk. Vulnerable, at-risk and otherwise concerned persons should remain home.
- Anyone who has even the slightest symptoms or feelings of sickness must remain home.
- I strongly encourage that each person conducts a voluntary self-assessment of their health as a pre-condition for attending Mass. A self-assessment questionnaire is attached.
- We will also continue the Live streaming of Masses.
- As you enter the church please sanitize your hands. Hand sanitizer will be available at the entrance.
- Maintain strict physical distancing (minimum of six feet apart, except members of the same household) when you come in, are in place and when you come for communion and exiting. Physical distancing policy is posted on the church door.

- Though according to the government directives, Mass attendance is limited to 50 but our Church in Friday Harbor (30) and hall (10) have the capacity of 40 people only, maybe 30 in Orcas Church and maybe around 30 in Lopez Church.
- The ushers will help you with your seating in the church.
- Please wear face masks when you are in the church except for communion.
- No Sign of Peace
- No distribution of the Precious Blood
- No holy water in fonts
- Communion only in the hands. (with hand extended in a fully flat manner so as minimize potential bodily contact when the Host is placed).
- No collection will be taken during the Mass (instead, baskets will be placed near the entrance and near the sacristy door as you exit.)
- Congregational singing is highly discouraged at this time. Only a cantor is allowed to sing or just instrumental music.
- Communion will be distributed not during the regular communion time but after the concluding blessing and the dismissal. Please remove any face coverings before presenting yourselves for Holy Communion. Please sanitize your hands if your hand is touched by the priest when receiving Communion.
- Volunteers will clean and sanitize the pews and other common use areas, including restrooms, immediately after Mass.
- We will not have coffee & donuts after the mass.
- We aren't allowed to put out our missals so if you like to follow along with the readings please bring your own missal or other aid such as the Magnificat or Word Among Us.

It is our wish and prayer that we will return to normal as early as possible, provided we follow the guidelines and are responsible. I know that these restrictions may seem to be excessive and our church as overreacting but we are called to be charitable, responsible and committed to the public health and for the common good of all while balancing that with our desire and right to the Sacraments.

If we get the approval for reopening Mass, from Monday June 1 we will have daily mass at 9am in Friday Harbor and on the weekends Saturday at 5.30, Sunday 9 am, 11 am and 6pm (Spanish mass) in Friday harbor and on Orcas Island 11.30 and on Lopez at 1:15 ( changes when the winter ferry schedule changes) to allow as many people as possible in a given period to have the opportunity to attend Holy Mass and receive the Eucharist. The Mass Schedule is published in the parish website and also posted on the church door post.

I request your dear friends to do reservation or sign-up for the mass so that we know how many would be attending the mass since there is a limit for each mass. You can do it by calling the parish office or by email. If you come to Mass without registering you may or may not get in depending on if the church is full or not. If it is full you will be put on the list for the following week. We have developed a sign-up system for attending Holy Mass. We need your names and contact information so that if

someone is identified as Covid-19 positive we are able to contact you. We guarantee to safeguard your privacy. The records will be destroyed after two weeks.

Dear friends, once again I request you for your cooperation and help. We are together in this battle. Please be assured of my prayers for you all. Please continue your valuable prayers for me and the parish community. I will inform you if any changes happen. If you have any question, please contact the parish office. Let's hope and pray for the best. Let's be positive. Soon we will meet together. God is with us always loving us, guiding us and protecting us. Our Blessed Virgin Mary and our Patron Saint Francis Xavier are praying for us. I wish you all a HAPPY FEAST OF PENTECOST! Stay healthy and Stay safe! God bless you all!

Yours in Christ,

Fr. Watson.