



Saint Mary's Catholic Church
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May 29, 2020

Dear St. Mary's Parishioners,

We are happy to share with you that we will begin celebrating public Masses again on the weekend of June 13 & 14, 2020. As you are aware, we have not gathered for public Masses since March 15, 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic that has spread throughout the whole world and the social distancing safety guidelines that were implemented to help slow the spread of the virus.

We have been able to stay in touch with many of you through the parish group email list called Mail Chimp, the parish website, the parish Facebook page, and the bulletin on the parish website. If you are not receiving the Mail Chimp messages, please contact the Parish Office with your current email address. Mass has been live streamed at 10:00 AM each Sunday beginning on April 5. We will continue to live stream one Mass per weekend and those links can be found on the parish website and on the parish Facebook page.

As we begin public Masses, we have developed and will implement a COVID-19 preparedness plan that addresses the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) guidance for safely reopening churches and directions from the Diocese of Winona-Rochester. This plan includes Guidelines to Resume Public Mass at St. Mary's Parish that is included in this mailing. Please carefully read our new guidelines as they provide detailed information about attending Mass and how to sign up for Mass. According to MDH and CDC guidelines, occupancy must not exceed 25% of total capacity, which means our parish will be limited to 50 people at each Mass. Since it will not be possible for all people to come to Mass every weekend, we encourage you to be flexible in considering attendance at a daily Mass during the week. Our bishop, Most Reverend John Quinn, has temporarily dispensed all Catholics in our diocese from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass. Anyone with symptoms of cold or flu, and persons over the age of 65 and/or with underlying health conditions that could make contracting coronavirus more severe are encouraged not to attend Mass. If you are particularly afraid, worried, or anxious, you might opt to join us via live stream. Fr. Mike and the staff are available for phone conversations or Zoom meetings.

There is no timeline for how long restrictions will be in place; further developments may follow for the loosening of restrictions or call for the tightening of restrictions. We learn something new each day. Already some suggest that six feet is not enough, face coverings should always be worn when out of the house, and time together should be limited especially when indoors. The pandemic is not over, and the risk remains. Remember, you are not obliged to attend in any way, and you are not obliged to receive Communion. It would be good to avail yourself to online or TV Masses as well as the Prayer of Spiritual Communion if you are not physically present. To ensure the safest experience for all, we ask for your cooperation with the guidelines included with this letter. Please note that we are making every attempt to keep you safe by cleaning high traffic areas after each Mass. Please let us know if you have any questions or concerns. We continue to ask for God's guidance during this challenging time.

Finally, on another matter, the parish of St. Mary's gratefully acknowledges Janice Erpelding's retirement at the end of June following more than 40 years of service to the parish and school communities (30 years at the church and 10 years at the school). As the first person visitors generally see when coming to our parish, Jan has always been an excellent witness by her welcoming spirit and her joyful heart. Personally, I have enjoyed Janice's dedication to her work as well as her wisdom about the life of the parish over time. At the appropriate time, we will celebrate Janice's service to all of us. We wish Janice the best as she embarks on another journey of life.

Sincerely in Christ,

Fr. Mike Cronin and all the St. Mary's Parish Staff

Enclosures:

Guidelines to Resume Public Masses (St. Mary's Parish, Winona, MN)

Fr. Mike's 25th Anniversary Celebration