

Dear St. Joseph Parishioners & Friends,

As the “Responsible Restart Ohio Plan” is implemented during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, allowing a gradual return to work and lifting of some of the restrictions regarding consumer, retail and services, the Catholic Bishops of the State of Ohio have announced directives for the safe return to the public celebration of Mass. On May 8, the priests of the Diocese of Youngstown were informed by Bishop George V. Murry, S.J. that we will begin celebrating Mass again with our people. **St. Joseph Church weekend Masses will begin again on Pentecost Sunday, May 31, (9:00 a.m. Mass only) and weekday Masses resume on June 2 (8:00 a.m. Tuesdays only).**



The Worship Office of the Diocese of Youngstown, in consultation with Liturgical Commissions throughout the dioceses of Ohio, has provided *Directives and Guidelines for the Diocese of Youngstown* outlining the safe practices and procedures we must implement for the resumption of public liturgies. These directives/guidelines currently remain in effect by order of Bishop Murry and will be revised or changed should any further directives be issued by the Governor of Ohio, the Bishops of Ohio, or Bishop Murry. They are considered to be temporary until it is determined safe to return to the normal circumstances.

DISPENSATION FROM THE OBLIGATION TO ATTEND SUNDAY MASS

The Catholic faithful who reside in the Diocese of Youngstown and all other Catholics in the diocese and especially those who are sick, or at high risk of becoming sick continue to be dispensed from their Sunday obligation until further notice.

Understanding the desire of many to return to church, it remains important for those who are at greater risk to refrain from returning until such time they feel comfortable and confident to do so. Those who are symptomatic or who have been exposed to another with the virus within 14 days should not attend Mass in accordance with national, state and local health directives. Those over 60 years of age and those who are vulnerable as a result of illness (including people who have chronic lung disease or moderate to severe asthma, serious heart conditions, comprised immune system, severe obesity, diabetes, chronic kidney or liver disease) should be extra diligent in practicing precautions like frequent hand washing, social distancing, regularly cleaning surfaces, and staying home.

As we gather on May 31st, Masses at St. Joseph’s will look and feel different . . .

- Both the entrance doors and sanctuary doors will be propped open to avoid touching.
- Appropriate cleaning of high use areas within the church is to be done before and after each service.
- Holy water fonts at the entrances remain empty until further notice.
- Collection basket and bulletins will be made available in the Narthex.
- Every effort to ensure appropriate physical distancing before, during, and after liturgical celebrations is required. There will be no gathering in the Narthex. Ushers will be positioned at the back of the church to assist with appropriate spacing requirements. Church capacity will be limited to 200 people.
- Those attending Mass are asked to wear masks or face coverings. Hand sanitizer will be available.
- There will be no music and hymnals have been removed and stored for the time being.
- Liturgical Ministers will not be serving. Deacon Gerry and I will be doing the readings and distributing Communion (no reception of the Precious Blood from the chalice).
- Physical contact during the Lord’s Prayer and the Sign of Peace is suspended. Those present are encouraged to bow to others and offer words of peace.
- Appropriate spacing between individuals in the Communion Procession is to be maintained.
- When approaching the minister, the communicant is to pull their mask below their chin. After “Body of Christ” is said, the host is carefully placed in the hand avoiding any incidental contact. Communicants, after responding, “Amen,” reverently place the Eucharist in their mouth and replace their mask.
- No other large gatherings will be permitted on the premises until further notice.
- Parishioners are encouraged to continue viewing Mass online or TV if not attending in person.

May the Lord bless us and His entire human family throughout the world, and keep us all safe and well.
Peace be with you!

Rev. Edward Stafford