

May 25, 2020

To the Good People of the Church of St. Vincent de Paul,

Over two months ago we received news from our Archbishop that all public Masses across the Archdiocese were to be suspended. This past week we received news that the suspension has been lifted and parishes have been granted “permission for the resumption of the public celebration of Mass.”

So, trusting in God, we take a deep breath and venture forward. Beginning on Wednesday, May 27th, we will begin celebrating public Mass every day here at St. Vincent de Paul.

Pope Benedict XVI, in his very first homily after being elected Pope, remarked that, “the Church is young.” He reminded us that with every new day we are to be like wide-eyed children in the presence of God’s ever fresh and surprising grace. This moment too, presents us with some hope-filled new “first steps” that God calls us to take together as a parish.

As we do, the Bishops remind us all that the dispensation to attend Sunday Mass is still in effect. That means that nobody is obligated to attend Mass. Furthermore, the Bishops encourage “those most at risk” and specifically, “persons over age 65 and those with preexisting health conditions” to stay home.

Since there is no obligation to attend Sunday Mass, some might find more comfort in attending one of our weekday Masses instead of a Sunday Mass. There is also no obligation for those who do come to Mass to come forward to receive Holy Communion. Each one of us is called to discern and to act according to one’s own individual conscience and state in life.

The Bishops insist that, for parishes to resume public Mass, we must be ready to implement the many new health and safety protocols. To that end, we have a great team who has been working for weeks now here at the parish to welcome you back. Here is our commitment to you as we open again the doors to public liturgies here at St. Vincent de Paul:

Social Distancing at Masses

For the foreseeable future, we plan to offer online Mass which will continue to be available, on our website and Facebook, Saturday evening through Monday morning at 8:00 AM. Please continue to watch for any updates or changes.

To spread out attendance we will offer Masses in the Sanctuary on weekends as follows:

- Saturday at 3:00 PM (This is a temporary addition and will be the Mass that is recorded. Cameras will be present at the front of church and may be distracting for some. There will be no visual aids on the screens.)
- Saturday at 5:00 PM
- Sunday at 7:30 AM
- Sunday at 9:00 AM
- Sunday at 11:00 AM

If necessary, we will consider adding Mass times or live streaming from Regan Hall. This will be evaluated as we progress over the next weeks.

Daily Mass will be offered Monday through Friday at 8:00 AM in the Sanctuary

- We will adhere to the limits placed on numbers in attendance and not exceed 25% of the church's total occupancy up to a maximum of 250 people in a single self-contained space. To encourage the 6 foot distancing between people who do not live in the same household, the following visual indicators have been implemented:
 - Pews in the sanctuary have been roped off to spread out seating
 - Spots have been put in the pews that are open for seating to provide a visual for the recommended 6 foot spacing
 - Tape lines in the aisle ways indicate 6 foot spacing
- We will monitor the number of people entering the church. Once capacity is reached the doors will be closed to further entry. Sunday morning (not Saturday), we will transmit the Mass via FM radio and anyone wishing to remain in their cars and participate in Mass from the parking lot are invited to do so. Please be patient with us over these next weeks, particularly if you are denied access because we have reached capacity. We will make adjustments as needed to ensure that all who want to participate are able to do so, but some might be affected in these first days.
- The children's chapel will be closed.
- Holy Water fonts will remain empty.
- We will not offer the Sign of Peace with any physical contact.
- We will not be passing a collection basket. There will be designated donation areas at each entrance.
- Bathrooms will be open but social distancing must be maintained. We ask that you limit their use as much as possible.
- Weather permitting, entry doors will be propped open at the beginning and end of each Mass to eliminate the need to touch doors. Some doors may be marked "EXIT ONLY". Please do not try to enter through those doors.
- We remind everyone of the CDC recommendations including the use of their own cloth face masks for anyone over the age of 2. We encourage people to bring and use their own hand sanitizer. Each person should self-assess prior to entering the building by answering these questions. Do you have:
 - A new fever (100°F or higher), or a sense of having a fever?
 - A new cough that you cannot attribute to another health condition?
 - New shortness of breath that you cannot attribute to another health condition?
 - A new sore throat that you cannot attribute to another health condition?
 - Chills?
 - New muscle aches that you cannot attribute to another health condition, or that may have been caused by a specific activity (such as physical exercise)?
 - Loss of sense to taste or smell?

If you answer yes to any of these questions, please stay home.

Liturgical Ministers

We respect and encourage everyone to discern if this is the time to volunteer for ministry. St Vincent's has undertaken precautionary cleaning, disinfecting, and implemented social distancing guidelines to help reduce the risk of exposure. However, we cannot guarantee that everyone will be 100% safe from exposure to COVID-19. Therefore, based on CDC guidelines, St. Vincent's recommends that people over 65 or those with underlying health conditions not volunteer at this time.

- Altar servers will not be utilized through the summer
- Choirs will be suspended through the summer
- Ushers/Greeters will be gradually introduced throughout the summer
- Lectors will be scheduled through the summer – please watch for emails
- Extraordinary Ministers of Communion will be trained and scheduled – please watch for emails

Reception of Holy Communion

Holy Communion will be offered after Mass for those who wish to receive.

- Distance markers clearly indicate appropriate 6 foot spacing in aisles.
- Communion Ministers will sanitize their hands before distribution.
- Communion Ministers will wear a mask and stand behind a clear barrier while distributing Holy Communion.
- The faithful are encouraged to receive Holy Communion in the hand.
- Prior to coming forward we ask that recipients sanitize their hands.
- In the event a Communion Minister touches a recipient's hand or has contact that might have caused contamination, the minister will immediately sanitize prior to continuing with distribution.
- Communion ministers will sanitize their hands thoroughly after distribution.
- Distribution of the Precious Blood to the faithful will continue to be suspended.
- Extraordinary Ministers of Communion will be trained on proper protocol.
- The logistics for coming forward to receive communion and exiting will be explained at Mass. Those who are not receiving communion, may leave once Mass is over. In order to maintain proper distancing, we will ask that everyone exit by row so as not to gather in the aisles.
- Communion will not be distributed at this time in the parking lot.

Cleaning, disinfection, and ventilation

The maximum amount of fresh air is being brought into the sanctuary and air recirculation is being limited. Ventilation systems are being properly used and maintained.

After each Mass and before another liturgy begins, high-use areas will be wiped down with disinfectant to include pews, chairs, handrails, doorknobs and push plates. Restroom facilities will be sanitized after each Mass. Maintenance team members will routinely clean and disinfect all areas, such as bathrooms, common areas, shared electronic equipment, machinery, tools, offices, controls, countertops and floors.

Our plan is comprehensive and includes even more safeguards than are listed here. Our staff has been trained on proper procedures. Everything will be closely monitored and directives will be adjusted if necessary. I have so much appreciation for those who have been rolling out our safety plan – and for the handful of people who have clocked extra hours throughout this time of shutdown to come up with creative and inspiring ways for us to stay connected and pray. There is no darkness that can keep the splendor of God from shining through. These past months have been difficult, but so glorious as well.

Keep praying for healing and strength for those who are suffering and troubled. We are grateful for so much kindness that we have received here at the parish office and for your continued financial support too. You have shown epic love and faith. I have no doubt that God has us primed and we are ready for an outpouring of blessings soon to come.

I remain here for you. We go forth now in the way our Lord sets before us,



Fr. Dennis Zehren
Pastor