

May 15, 2020

The Staff and I met today after having combed through our parish's developed directives based on our bishop's diocesan directives he issued regarding the reopening celebration of parish Masses in our diocese, as the COVID-19 Crisis continues.

With the Catholic Novus Ordo Sacred Ritual remaining the same, which you are most familiar with at Mass, be prepared for lots of logistic and health-safety changes from our bishop's directives which we must introduce and follow. These involve HOW we as faithful Catholics should now celebrate Mass in these current times. Our bishop reminds us that the COVID Crisis continues, and we cannot return to a complete former way of HOW we used to do things as a community of Catholics. The COVID-19 Crisis is NOT over. Keep in mind that our Pastoral Staff, parish volunteers, parishioners and I will all be taking the risk of exposing ourselves to each other at Masses, even with social distancing directives, and with issued health-safety guidelines in place, which we must follow as we slowly reopen our parishes. Also, keep in mind that our bishop's dispensation for Catholics to not have to fulfill one's Sunday Obligation is still in effect. So, I ask the elderly, the weak and "vulnerable-in-health" to discern well, and to sincerely consider continuing worshipping by viewing our live-streamed Sunday Masses, and continue your prayers and financial support for our parish, even if you choose, to not yet attend our communal weekend Masses.

I will be putting out more information this week and ask you to view our parish's website and weekday Masses for this, or call the parish office if you have questions. However, here are some important pieces to know ahead of time for your consideration to attend, or not to attend, weekend Masses at this time of reopening.

1. We are now seeking about 20 "non-vulnerable parish volunteers" to assume specific roles for each of our returning weekend liturgies. We will need these parishioners informed, trained and in place by the weekend May 24th and 25th. Contact Stephanie Sims.
2. We will begin reopening our weekend liturgies on Saturday, May 24th with a celebration of the 4:00 p.m. Saturday, Vigil Mass. Regarding confessions, due to the nature of gathering in groups to wait for confession, as we have continued to announce on our parish website, confessions should be celebrated by appointment only, at this time. Call the parish office and I will accommodate you in any way I can.
3. We also plan to celebrate the Sunday, May 23rd, 9:30 Mass in English, and the 4:00 p.m. Mass in Spanish.
4. Please arrive 30 minutes early for any Mass, if you choose to come, because a line may form since social distancing will be honored, and you will have to have your temperature taken, sanitize your hands, and wear a face mask as you enter the church.

If you already have a mask, please enter wearing it. If you do not have one, a face mask will be given to you.

5. For Masses, park your vehicle by spacing your vehicle in between every other parking slot to help keep social distancing between you and others in the parking lot.

6. Gathering for fellowship in the Gathering Hall, both before or after Mass, is neither encouraged nor permissible, yet. If you have children, no child care is available, and the Gathering Hall cannot be used yet for your children to be overseen, or left unattended causing a concern for social distancing for your children and for others.

7. No Altar Servers will be asked to serve at this time. Deacons, Ushers, Hospitality/Door Greeters, Musicians, Cantors, Lectors and EOMHC's who are able, not vulnerable, and healthy will be needed. Please sign-in before each Mass. Only a maximum of four persons are allowed in the Vesting Sacristy and the Working Sacristy behind the Altar, at any time.

8. Seating for individuals, couples, and families, at each Mass, is currently limited to a certain capacity for the sake of social distancing by both our governor's and our bishop's directives. Our ushers will know when to stop seating. Once capacity of occupants is reached, the church doors will, unfortunately, be locked as we initiate these new guidelines. Not knowing what to expect as we initially launch these unprecedented efforts for the health-safety of all, and as we inch through these steps of learning a new familiarity with the Mass in our current times, these considerations will certainly need to be revisited.

9. Ushers will assign and escort you to your pew-seats.

10. The number of people allowed inside our parish bathrooms will be limited also.

12. Before Mass begins, you will be asked to follow the logistical directives issued before Mass to place your offering and to receive Holy Communion honoring social-distancing.

13. By directives of our bishop for health-safety, Holy Communion will only be distributed to the faithful in the hand, not on the tongue and the Precious Blood will not be distributed to the Faithful during Masses at this time. Please note,, as the Church teaches, the fullness of Christ's True Presence is received in either of the consecrated species.

14. After each Mass, the Worship Space, Gathering Hall, Eucharistic Chapel and bathrooms will have to be sanitized again by some of our trained parish volunteers.

15. Regarding weekday Masses, I have chosen not to celebrate these with a "gathering" of our local parish community yet, but will continue to live-stream them at the regularly scheduled weekday times that we have been celebrating them. With the changes alone

that each of us will experience at weekend Masses, I felt it best. at this time, to continue limiting our physical exposure to each other throughout the weekdays, but also allow the faithful of our parish time to learn and see how to celebrate the Sunday Solemnity first with all its new health-safety changes.

16. To make a visit before the Most Blessed Sacrament reposed in the Tabernacle, we have new guidelines that also must be followed beginning on Tuesday, May 26th from 9 a.m until 5:00 p.m. Visits will be based on the trust I have in our parishioners in which s/he must first obtain a key from Kevin O'Neil for a visit only during the parish office business hours. The faithful must wear a face mask at all times upon entering the church and the Eucharistic Chapel, and only a maximum of six people will be allowed to be present in the church/or Eucharistic Chapel at time. I would ask that the faithful honor a maximum of thirty minutes per visit to allow for others to come after you. Before you depart, you will be asked to sanitize the area where you worshipped and prayed. Also, if you use our parish restroom facilities, you will be asked to report this when you return the church key before you leave.

I invite you to please be patient and understanding with others and me as we address one priority at a time, with the Sunday Mass and our worship each weekend being the first and top priority. There are no models to follow in this reopening process, So, this effort will require patience, understanding and a lot of love anticipating the mistakes, and the blessings, we'll encounter as faithful disciples of Jesus and as faithful citizens.

Lastly, please read the included official announcements from our bishop regarding the reopening of our diocesan parishes.

In His Grip,
Father Charles