

Dear Parishioners,

We are in an unprecedented time in the history of our Parish. Our statement suggests that we are a family who prays together. Certainly, this has not been the case and family element of physical community and the Eucharist have been painfully absent from our Parish for almost two months, and I share in this suffering.

Bishop Spalding has announced that public celebrations of Mass can resume in the Diocese of Nashville on Monday, May 18. Although Bishop Spalding has authorized public celebrations of Mass beginning May 18, no parish is required to begin on that date. Each pastor has been given the flexibility to determine the best date for re-opening his parish based on his individual parish situation. Our sacristans and the Parish council will form a team to provide input related first and foremost to the safety of you, our parishioners. There are many considerations to be thought out in careful planning such as maintaining social distancing, personal protective gear, sanitization between Masses, etc.

In order to accomplish that, and to ensure we are prepared as possible, I have made the decision to conduct **our first weekday Mass on Tuesday, May 26, 2020 at Noon**. Our weekday Mass schedule will remain the same throughout the week. Livestreaming of Sunday Mass will continue through June 30. Public celebration of **weekend Mass will begin on Sunday, May 31<sup>st</sup> Mass at 11 a.m.**

Sunday Mass will allow us to seat, at most, 30 while maintaining proper social distancing between families.

Families and individuals will be asked to remain socially distanced outside until directed where to sit by an usher, and all must arrive together to be seated together. I am asking everyone for their patience as adjustments are being made to the way we are used to celebrating Mass. This may at times lead to discomfort and frustration, so patience and charity of all involved will be essential to handling these changes. **It is strongly recommended that you arrive early to Mass so everyone can be properly seated.**

As the Bishop stated, dispensation from Sunday Mass remains in effect through June 30, and if you are in a high-risk category due to illness, age (over 65) or other health issues, you are **strongly encouraged** to observe Bishop Spalding's dispensation by staying home. You who are in this category might consider attending weekday Mass because it is less crowded, and it will be easier to distance yourself from the other Mass attendees. **However, we will make it safe for anyone to attend weekend Masses.**

Aside from Divine Worship and the celebration of the Sacraments (including weddings, baptisms, and funerals), **we will avoid social gatherings in excess of ten people in the parish property through the 30<sup>th</sup> of June 2020**. This will include in-person bible studies, choir rehearsal, parish council meetings, finance council meeting, CCD, RCIA and any other in-person meetings or non-liturgical gathering **until further notice**. As it has been the case during the entirety of this crisis, church will remain open for personal prayer, Eucharistic Adoration, and confessions.

As you enter for Mass, you will be required to wear a face mask, and it must be worn until you leave, removing it only for the reception of Holy Communion. You are highly encouraged to bring your own mask. One will be provided to you if you do not bring your own. Masks will not be required for children under two years of age. Hand sanitizer will be made available at the entrances and exits, and you should sanitize your hands on the way in and on the way out. All hard surfaces that have been occupied, as well as all patens used in the distribution of Holy Communion will be sanitized between each Mass.

A few other adjustments you may notice:

- Holy Water and Baptismal fonts will remain empty.
- There will be no worship aids in the pews.
- At the Offertory, we will not pass the collection baskets, and the gifts will not be brought down – stationary collection baskets will be placed around the back of the Sanctuary for you to place your offering.
- There will be no sign of peace.
- The ushers will direct you and your family out of your pew for Communion, maintaining six feet between families or single individuals.
- Distribution of the Precious Blood is suspended for the time being.
- We ask that you receive the Eucharist in your hand, not on your tongue, and that you not wear gloves (the Priest will be wearing a mask and will sanitize his hands before and after the distribution of Communion and will do his best not to make touch contact with your hand.)
- Dismissal will be announced by row.
- We ask that you not congregate after Mass inside the church or Narthex while we are still using social distancing protocol.
- Everyone will be required to have his/her temperature checked before Mass outside the church with a non-contact thermometer and answer in the positive that they feel well and to their knowledge have not been exposed to the Coronavirus.
- No altar servers until further notice.

As you can see, these procedures have been carefully thought out with the safety of our parishioners as our number one priority. We will monitor attendance each week and keep up to date on the latest CDC and civic recommendations before making decisions to adjust any of these procedures. It is my prayer that we are all able to come back and enjoy Mass as a community and that we can, with patience and understanding, comply with all of these new procedures in such a way that will allow for a prayerful return to Mass and for the reception of the Eucharist for which you have had to go without for so long. We will have further communications as we continue to develop these procedures with the sacristans and the Parish Council.

Please rest assured of my continued prayers for you, for your family, and for the resolution of this pandemic.

Please keep our parish in your prayers in this challenging time. You are all in my prayers as well.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Fr. Zack