

Guidelines for Reopening the Church for the Celebration of Public Masses

It is with a spirit of joy and thanksgiving that we are looking forward to resuming the celebration of the Eucharist in our Church.

We want this to be a time when as a parish community, we feel the welcoming presence of Christ while we gather as safely as possible. In order to do so, we will be following this set of guidelines.

Dates and Times

We will begin with a “soft opening” on Memorial Day – May 25th at 9:00 a.m.

Mass will be celebrated Tuesday through Friday of that week at 8:00 a.m.

On Pentecost Weekend – May 30th and 31st, we will follow our usual schedule:

Saturday 5:00 p.m. and Sunday 8:00 a.m., 9:30 a.m. and 11:30 a.m.

Who should come?

The dispensation from the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days remains in effect. Because of this, anyone who wishes to participate in Mass and receive Holy Communion can do so by attending a mass any day of the week. The lighter attendance on the weekdays can give you more space for social distancing. In addition, we will continue to livestream the 9:30 Sunday masses on Facebook and on our website so you can join us there.

Anyone who is at risk of complications from COVID, has family members at risk, or is fearful of coming should put their safety first and remain at home. Anyone who feels even slightly ill should also stay home.

Creating a Safe Space

Hand sanitizer will be available for you to use as you enter Church.

We are asking that everyone who is able to please wear a mask. This is for the protection of everyone around you.

We know that physically distancing yourself from others can greatly reduce transmission of viruses. When you enter church, you will find some of the pews blocked off with ribbon. This will allow family groups to sit at least six feet away from others.

During mass, when we pray the Our Father, we ask that there be no holding of hands.

During the sign of peace, you are encouraged to wave or otherwise acknowledge your fellow parishioners without shaking hands or making physical contact.

Since the COVID virus lives longer than one would hope on surfaces, in between masses we will be cleaning the areas of the church that have been touched: The tops of the pews, the marble around the font, the doors, the lectern, the bathrooms, etc. To allow us social distancing space to quickly get this done, we ask that people leave the church right after the mass has ended. We know that it would be lovely to stay and pray or chat, but we need to clean the pew you are in, we need to be able to walk down the aisles with six feet distance, so please help us by going outside after mass. Perhaps a walk around the beautiful gardens could be a prayerful time after mass.

The bulletins will be placed around the church on tables rather than handed out. We would be pleased if you would take one home. The bulletin is also always available on our website.

Receiving Holy Communion

We will need to make a few changes in the procedures we use during reception of communion. In order to maintain distance between people, ushers will let people in each pew know when it is their turn to line up. Watch for their direction, and look for the tape on the floor that marks out six-foot distances. In the front of church, we will be using the side aisles to line up and the center aisle to return to our pews. Please be aware of those around you, and allow them to maintain their distance from you when going back to your pew. In the back of church also, please watch for directions from the usher stationed there.

Communion will be distributed only in the hand (and not on the tongue). Our Eucharistic Ministers will reverently place the host in your hand with minimal contact.

Communion from the chalice will not be offered.

Singing and the Virus

Unfortunately, the current research shows that singing in a group spreads COVID, even when masks are worn. Because of this, we are planning masses without congregational singing, and ask that you speak the responses quietly. This greatly saddens us, as we have a wonderful, singing parish, but we very much are called as Christians to place a high priority on protecting the vulnerable among us.

Confessions

The confines of the Reconciliation Room in Church (confessional) does not allow for social distancing. In order to make this sacrament as prayerful and safe as possible, Fr. Terry will be hearing confessions in the parish center on Saturday from 2:00 until 4:15 May 30th. Enter the building directly into the gymnasium portion of the building by using the stairs to the left of the main door. A staff member will be present in the waiting area (gym). After you have received the sacrament, exit through the main glass doors.

In Conclusion

While there is no guarantee we can keep COVID from entering our doors, by working together we can do our very best to lower the risk of contagion. We will be re-evaluating on a regular basis what is working and what needs to be changed, what can be done better and what is no longer necessary. As the risk in our own area ebbs and flows, so must we be willing to be flexible and change what we need to do in order to keep each other healthy.

May God continue to bless our Parish Community through the healing and grace of the Eucharist and the Sacraments.

