

To all Parishioners

May 15, 2020

My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As you know, we will begin the public celebration of Holy Mass at our church next weekend, on Sunday, May 24 at 11.am.

While we certainly look forward to this with great anticipation, we must also follow the very carefully developed directives from our Diocese designed to protect all our loved ones and neighbors. I ask that you read the guidelines that follow them very closely, and please understand that our failure to comply with these guidelines could result in us no longer being able to celebrate Mass under this temporary operating arrangement.

Additional guidelines for how we will reopen safely and what you can expect if you choose to attend Mass are below.

Here are the guidelines we will be following when we resume Mass at Our Lady of Grace.

1. The dispensation from the obligation to attend Mass remains in effect until further notice. Sick persons and those more susceptible to infection – the elderly, those already in frail health – are urged to remain at home and participate in televised or online Masses. Anyone who fears being infected by attending Mass should stay home.
2. The church will remain locked until ½ hour before Mass. If you arrive earlier please stay in your car until the church is unlocked.
3. Social distancing will be required at Mass. Those who live in the same household may sit together, otherwise there must be six feet of separation between persons. There will be a reduced amount of seating because of this. After the pews are full, there will be some additional seating available in the church hall. Once both areas are full no one else may enter the church. When you arrive an usher will seat you. If they are seating others please wait, at a safe distance from others, for an usher.
4. Please do not use the pews that are roped off.
5. Hand sanitizer is available. Please use it when entering, exiting and right before you receive Communion.
6. The faithful are to wear masks during Mass, except at the moment of receiving Holy Communion. You should bring your own mask. We have a very limited supply available.
7. The Holy Water fonts will remain empty.
8. Some common though optional practices will be omitted: the use of hymnals, holding hands during the Our Father, the Sign of Peace, and the offering of the precious Blood of Christ.
9. Liturgical Ministries will be limited to the following: one lector, one organist and one cantor. There will be no altar servers, Extraordinary Ministers, or choir.
10. Presentation of the gifts by parishioners will not take place.

11. You are encouraged to bring your own missal, The Word Among Us, or some other worship aid since the missals have been removed from the pews. A handout with the readings will be available. Please remember to take your missal etc. home with you. Anything that is left in the pews will have to be disposed of.
12. The ushers will let you know when it is your pew's turn to proceed to Communion, including anyone sitting in the hall. Please remain seated until the usher releases you to go. Everyone must exit the pew and proceed up the center aisle, single file, staying 6 feet apart. If you will not be receiving communion please cross your arms over your chest to indicate such. It is encouraged that you receive communion in the hand. After the priest says, "the Body of Christ" and you say "Amen," approach the priest, stopping an arm's length away from him. Extend your arms and open your hand up fully. When you receive the Host, step to the side to the marked spot, then lower your mask to consume the Host.
13. The collection basket will not be passed around. There will be a collection basket at the rear of church to put your contribution in. Alternately, you can continue to mail or drop your envelopes in the mailbox.
14. When Mass is over the ushers will dismiss you row by row, starting at the back. Please use only the main entrance to enter and leave the building.
15. Please do not stand and chat with each other on the church grounds before or after Mass. This includes in the vestibule, the hall or in the church parking lot.
16. Confessions will be heard on Sundays after mass, and Tuesdays by appointment only. Please contact the Parish Office to schedule. Please note that both Fr. Thomas (or Fr. Giles) and the penitent will be required to wear masks.
17. The restroom will be open during Mass, but please sanitize all surfaces after use with the cleaning wipes supplied. Parents please note: you must accompany your child to the restroom.
18. Funeral Masses may be held in accordance with the same limitations and guidelines for normal Masses. Bereavement lunches may not be held.

Ed Rodriguez will be the coordinator of ushers and Maurine Mazzeo will be the coordinator of cleaners and they will provide more details to you. As a reminder, if you are able to volunteer as an usher, a cleaner, or both, please contact the Parish Office. We must have an adequate number of people available to fill these roles or we will not be able to have Mass.

My thanks to you for your patience and understanding during these initial weeks as we all adapt to these new directives.

With my continued prayers for your good health,

Fr. Thomas A. Sebastian

Administrator