

RETURN TO CHURCH GUIDELINES

As you are probably aware, churches in the diocese of Cleveland plan to reopen for Mass on the weekend of May 30 – 31, the Feast of Pentecost. Parishes are also able to offer daily Mass during the week prior to that. I wish to share some news regarding how our parish will respond. Please be aware that it is not as easy as simply unlocking the doors and letting you in! The diocese has sent out helpful guidelines to assist us in doing this reopening safely. We have reviewed them to determine how we will apply the directives to our worship space. What follows are the Guidelines for our parish as we return to Mass in the coronavirus era.

Preliminary Thoughts

- We will reopen the weekend of May 30-31 with our regular Mass schedule.
- **There remains NO OBLIGATION to attend weekend Mass for the foreseeable future.**
- If you are not feeling well, if you have any type of compromised immune system or for whatever reason do not feel comfortable being in large crowds or following the guidelines that will be in place at this time then please feel free to stay home.
- For those unable to attend we plan to record the 5:00 Mass each Saturday and make it available online for Sunday.
- We will NOT be hearing Confessions the weekend of May 30 – 31.
- Our weekday Mass at 11:00 A.M. will begin on **Wednesday, May 27. The Guidelines listed here also apply to weekday Mass attendees.**
- I want to emphasize that returning to church is going to look very different. As I mentioned previously, we received detailed guidelines from the diocese that we need to follow. They, in turn, are in keeping with directives that have come from the governor's office. The safety of all who gather here for worship is of the utmost importance.

Arriving for Mass

- There will be only one entrance into the church during this period of time. It is the entrance from the main parking lot into the Upper Gathering Area. These doors are clearly marked "CHURCH".
- **Everyone who enters will be required to wear a mask.** There will be someone there to welcome you and direct you to proceed through the Lower Gathering Area, keeping appropriate social distancing of 6 feet. This will be marked on the floor.
- The handicap ramp will be available for those who need it.
- As you enter the inside doors of the church you will need to sanitize your hands. Dispensers will be available for you to use or you may show that you are using your own.
- There will be a collection basket available inside the church doors if you wish to offer a contribution. There will also be a basket available as you exit. There will be no collection taken during the Mass.

Seating

- Once inside the church, you will be escorted to your seat. In order to assure social distancing we can only use every third pew and limit the number of persons in each pew to 3 people. This number can increase slightly when family members sit together as long as they are at least 6 feet away from any non-family members.
- We estimate that we can only accommodate 100 people at any one Mass. This is why it is important that you be escorted to your pew. **Seating is significantly reduced!**
- **When the church reaches capacity or at the time that Mass begins, the doors to the church will be secured.** No one will be able to enter! This does not prevent exiting the church in anyway.
- The restrooms in the church and Parish Center will be available.

During Mass

- Mass will proceed in the usual way except for the following: there will be only one Lector; hymnals have been removed and there will be no congregational singing; there will be no collection or Offertory Procession; we will not share the Sign of Peace.
- Communion will be distributed at one station in the front. The priest or other minister will be wearing a mask. You will be invited out of your pew by an usher, form a single line, keep a 6 foot distance between communicants, receive in the hand (no gloves, please) and return by the side aisle, maintaining the 6 foot distance.
- After responding, "AMEN", then please step aside, pull down your mask, reverently place the host in your mouth, and immediately replace your mask to cover your face.

Conclusion of Mass

- At the end of Mass someone will guide you to move row by row toward the middle doors at the cross aisle maintaining 6 foot distancing. Font side of the church use the side aisle; tabernacle side use the center aisle.
- Everyone will exit at this door and continue towards their car.
- Hand sanitizer will be available for those who wish to use it and bulletins will be handed to those who would like one by someone who will be wearing gloves.
- You will not be able to linger in the church or socialize.

Final Thoughts

Yes, it is going to look very different! I ask for your patience as we return to worship together in these challenging days. I suspect we may make some adjustments as we go forward. I ask for your support and prayer as we return to our church and work together to implement and follow these guidelines for the safety and health of all those who gather for worship in our parish community.