

Rules for attending Mass during pandemic

As I began to put the bulletin together last week, I was happy to put the Mass times in as of next Tuesday, May 26th. Our church will be open again and I am happy to welcome you back.

We are still living with the novel coronavirus, COVID-19, and a world-wide pandemic. Given the seriousness of the disease, the lack of a cure, and the contagiousness of this virus, we have to do things much differently in Church beginning next weekend. In the more than two months since we closed, all of us became familiar with face masks, gloves, hand sanitizer, and learned a new concept called social distancing. For our safety and to contain this virus, these are now part of our daily lives and will be part of our experience when we return to Sunday Mass next weekend.

When you arrive for Mass, the first thing you will notice is that there will be **only one way into the church building, the main entrance**. Those who park in the Marcella lot will have to walk through the tunnel to come to the front of the church and enter there. Those who are handicapped will be still be able to go through the side entrance and sit in the front pews of the Church.

Before you can enter the Church, **we will take your temperature** with a no-touch thermometer. If it is more than 100.4°F you will not be admitted. **You will need to wear a mask or face covering**. (If you don't have one, we will give you one. If you receive a cloth mask, take it home, wash it, and use it again.) The final step before entering the church will be to sanitize your hands.

When you come into the church, you will see a lot of blue tape. **Half of the pews have been closed off to maintain social distancing and each open pew will also be marked for social distancing**. Families living in the same household can sit together, all others have to maintain social distancing. We will no longer take up a collection at the Offertory. You will see offering boxes at each entrance and we ask that you **deposit your donations in the boxes**.

All movement in the church aisles will be "one way." The center aisle, goes to the front of the church and the side aisles go to the rear of the church. You can go to any pew and sit in approved places. At your seat you will notice no worship aids (missalettes, Mass cards, reading pages, song books). Those who have their own Sunday Missals are encouraged to bring and use them. Hymns in both Lithuanian and English will most likely be unfamiliar, as **you are being discouraged from singing at Mass**. The reasons behind this are too complicated to explain. All the prayers will be recited. **There will be no entrance procession or recessional, nor will there be an Offertory procession; there will be no ritual of the sign of peace**.

Everyone is asked to wear their mask the entire time they are in church, except when they receive communion. At communion time, you will be asked to come to communion one row at a time. **When you are about to receive communion, remove your mask and extend your hands to receive the host**. Those who insist on receiving communion on their tongue are asked to come at the end of the line, and only come to the priest. After you receive communion, return to your places via the side aisles.

If you need to use the rest room during Mass, please go to the side entrance where an usher will be stationed. He or she will guide you to the rest room area. **At the end of Mass, dismissal will be by the side aisles, one row at a time; remember to keep your social distance**. If you wish to visit a shrine or light candles, please wait until most of the people are out of Church. Then approach one at a time - keeping social distance. **Please keep your mask on until you leave the Church. There will be no social time after Mass**.

These changes may seem harsh and difficult to understand, but there are reasons for each of these changes and all are mandated by the Diocese. When I think of compliance, I think of the health and safety of all of you. It may seem cold and impersonal that I cannot greet you after Mass at the Church entrance and that you have to keep your distance from each other in Church. But if that is what it takes to help defeat this virus, then let's all do it. I hope one day soon a vaccine will be developed or a cure will be found and we can go back to normal. Let us continue to pray that this will happen soon.

Blessings! Fr. Joe Bacevice