

ST. JOSEPH – ST. LAWRENCE PARISH
“Two Churches, One Parish”

May 18, 2020

Dear St. Joseph-St. Lawrence parishioner,

I hope this letter finds you and your family healthy and safe. During the past two months, I have missed our time together, though I understand the need to stay home and keep our community safe. In fact, as I've said daily Mass, I have imagine you all filling the pews in our churches, and that has given me comfort.

As you may be aware, Archbishop Naumann has announced that with the lifting of the stay-at-home order, we are able to open our churches. That will, however, come with some significant restrictions. While we are excited to being celebrating together, we must incorporate a number of safeguards to protect each other.

First, let me remind you that the Archbishop has dispensed our obligation to attend Sunday Mass, meaning you are not obligated to attend. I encourage those of you who may be more vulnerable to the virus to take advantage of this dispensation, and know that we will pray for you during each of our Masses until you feel comfortable returning. In addition, those who have any symptoms of coronavirus or have had a recent exposure to an infected person are encouraged to stay home.

We will return to our communal worship with special Memorial Day Masses that will be held outdoors (weather permitting) at our two cemeteries. Mass at Mt. Olivet Cemetery near St. Joseph of the Valley church is scheduled for 5 p.m., Saturday, May 23, and Mass at St. Lawrence cemetery will be at 9 a.m., Sunday, May 24. Parishioners are required to provide their own seating, face masks and hand sanitizer. Going forward, all parishioners will be required to wear masks at Mass and apply hand sanitizer upon entering the church.

Following the Memorial Day weekend outdoor Masses, we will begin having Mass at our two churches again. Per the Archbishop's direction, church attendance will be limited to 25% of the building's seating capacity so we can allow for the required social distancing. Depending on the size of each household (one person or many), we will have very limited capacity — 30-75 at St. Lawrence and 15-30 at St. Joseph of the Valley. To further enhance our ability to maintain the maximum space between each other, we will be offering four Masses per week. Please do not feel obligated to attend weekend Masses — weekday Masses will work just fine if it fits into your family's schedule. Masses will be offered on the following days:

Tuesday, 7 p.m., St. Lawrence
Thursday, 7 p.m., St. Joseph of the Valley
Saturday, 5 p.m., St. Joseph of the Valley
Sunday, 9 a.m., St. Lawrence

In order to ensure we will meet attendance guidelines, parishioners must sign up for Mass using an online sign-up form. You can access the sign-up form for all available Masses at <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/9040A4AA9AB2AA1FA7-stjosephst>. This link will also be emailed to parishioners and is available on the parish website. Please enter the number of people from your household who will be attending. If you do not have internet access or have any difficulty in signing up, you may call Sharon Wagner or Jason Nichols for assistance (their numbers are listed below). Those who have not signed up, but arrive for one of the Masses will be asked to wait outside until we are certain we can accommodate your group.

Below are a number of additional safeguards that will be in place until further notice:

- Before entering the church, a parish volunteer will ask for your name, give you hand sanitizer to use and make sure you are wearing a mask. Please bring your own masks.
- Once inside, please move to the unoccupied pew closest to the front of the church. Only individuals living in the same household may occupy a pew.
- Volunteers may ask you to adjust your seating if you are sitting closer than the minimum six (6) feet from the nearest attendee. Please be cooperative.
- Mass will last no longer than 45 minutes, limiting exposure time.
- Congregational singing will be suspended to limit droplet dispersion.
- There will be no missalettes or other books available in the pews.
- Bathrooms will be closed during Mass to limit exposure in common areas. Please use the restroom before arriving at the church.
- There will be a single line for Holy Communion (no side-by-side standing). Please maintain a six (6) foot distance between you and others not in your household.
- There will be no communion from the cup or communion on the tongue.
- You are to remove your mask only for the reception of Holy Communion.
- Please exit the church in an orderly fashion, with the pews in the back exiting first.
- Please use hand sanitizer when exiting and avoid congestion at the doors.

Maintaining proper sanitation in our churches is going to take extra work. If you are interested in being a host family for one of our Masses, please contact Jason Nichols 913.683.2661 or Sharon Wagner 913.683.4495. Duties will include opening the doors before Mass, documenting who is attending, distributing hand sanitizer and making sure masks are worn, ensuring parishioners are maintaining proper social distancing in the pews, distributing bulletins and wiping down pews, doors and other high-touch surfaces after Mass.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me by phone. I am excited to celebrate with you once again and want to thank you in advance for your support of these inconvenient restrictions. Remember, they are in place for the safety of our parish community.

Father Francis Bakyor
Pastor
St. Joseph-St. Lawrence Parish