

Dear Members of Sacred Heart Church,

What a wonderful experience it is to be celebrating Mass once again on weekday mornings with you. Although we were appropriately “spaced” and “masked” the faith, devotion and love of this community was clearly seen and felt. What an honor and a blessing it is to be a part of Sacred Heart.

I would now like to offer to you the directives that Bishop O’Connell has asked us to follow for weekend Masses. Once again, it is important to note:

“Those who are hesitant or fearful because of COVID-19 concerns as well as those with a COVID-19 diagnosis or symptoms, those who may be asymptomatic carriers, those not feeling well, those with underlying health conditions or those in a high-risk category should stay at home and avoid any public gathering.”

It is also important to remember that the dispensation from Sunday/Holy Day Mass will remain in effect until Monday, September 7, 2020 and the fulfillment of the Easter Duty is extended to the First Sunday of Advent, November 29, 2020. In other words, at this time, there is no obligation to attend Mass preceded by the Sacrament of Confession.

We will begin to celebrate Sunday Mass at Sacred Heart on June 13-14, the Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ, with **no more than 1/3 occupancy**. Because social distancing (6 feet) between groups of people from the same household and any other groups/individuals and between single individuals must be maintained our Church can accommodate **no more than 70 people at one Mass**. Designated pews have been marked.

As I stated before, I truly understand the deep longing and strong need we all have to celebrate Mass and receive Holy Communion, but it is also important to stress, at this time, the importance of patience, common sense, and, especially, the health and well-being of ourselves, our loved ones and all the members of our parish. It will be very difficult to inform dedicated parishioners who have come from home to Church in the hopes of celebrating Mass at a Church and with a community that they love that, because of social distancing and the still-present danger of COVID-19, the Church has reached its required capacity. I hope that many of you will consider alternating Mass attendance among family members or with friends, continue in the manner you have been honoring the Lord’s Day these past few months or, perhaps, attending the 8:30 weekday Mass which, at this time, has room for a few more participants. Remember, the obligation to attend Sunday Mass has been suspended at the present time.

We will begin by celebrating Mass this weekend close to our usual Sunday schedule: Saturday at 4:30 PM, Sunday at 7:30 AM, 9:30 AM and 11:30 AM. Because of the current curfew and the need to sanitize the Church after Mass, the usual 7:00 Sunday evening Mass has been suspended until further notice. I would certainly be willing to add extra Sunday Masses, if necessary, but I would first need to know where best to add those Masses for the good of the people. This first weekend will be very helpful in

determining that and I will communicate any changes to you as soon as possible. As with our weekday Masses, the following directives from the Diocese will be followed:

- All persons will enter through the Main Entrance of the Church. No gathering at the entrance, on the steps or in the parking lot. Masks must be worn at all times, regular hand washing should take place before and after Mass. Rest Rooms will be open.
- There will be no gathering/greeting before or after Mass, no communal prayers/devotions before or after Mass, no missalettes, hymnals or any printed material in or near the pews, no congregational singing, no collection will be taken up (a container for parish offerings will be placed in the back of the Church), no Presentation of Gifts and no Sign of Peace.
- There will be two Communion stations in the center aisle. Holy Communion will be distributed only as the Body of Christ. The Chalice will not be shared. Communion in the hand is preferred. Those who wish to receive Holy Communion on the tongue should be last in line and receive from Father John only. Masks may be removed for Communion and then placed back on after receiving. Social distancing between those in the Communion line (6 feet apart) must be maintained.
- At the conclusion of Mass, parishioners will exit the Church, pew by pew, beginning with the last pew, maintaining social distancing and returning immediately to their cars. Those who wish to remain to pray may do so, but the prayer should be in private and in silence.
- Sanitation of the church will begin when all have departed.

Let us continue to remember that whenever and wherever we gather together to worship and pray, in Church, at home or on-line even when only two or three are present, the Lord promised to be with us.

“Here in this place new light is streaming, now is the darkness vanished away,  
See in this space our fears and our dreamings brought here to you in the light of this day  
Gather us in the lost and forsaken, Gather us in the blind and the lame;  
Call to us now, and we shall awaken, we shall arise to the sound of our name.”

May the Lord bless you and keep you in His care,  
Father John