

June 8, 2020 (updated)

Dear Friends:

We have received permission from our Bishop to resume the public celebration of Mass this weekend. Our staff and leadership have discussed what Mass will be like when we return, and believe we have a plan that follows the guidelines set by our Diocese, follows recommendations from the Center for Disease Control, and makes sense for our community.

As we resume the public celebration of Mass, remember no one should feel obligated to attend. If you have flu like symptoms or a temperature over 100.4 you are not to be at church for any reason. If you are in a high-risk category or live with someone who is high-risk – who has underlying health issues, respiratory health issues, or a compromised immune system – you are encouraged to stay home. Anyone over the age of 65 should also carefully consider whether or not to attend Mass.

The dispensation from the obligation to attend Mass will continue indefinitely. Further, our Bishop has offered a dispensation from the need to receive Communion once during the Easter Season. While we are not mandating the wearing of masks should you decide to attend Mass, all adults who choose to attend are strongly encouraged to wear a mask.

It is important that we respect one another's decision whether or not to attend, for we do not know everyone's story. People may be dealing with things we are not aware of. Many people will choose to stay away from Mass when we reopen, whereas others will choose to come. Some will choose to wear masks, others will choose not to. Some will want to stop and talk. Others will come into church and leave immediately after Mass. As our prayer to Our Lady of Guadalupe states, "teach all of us in the Church to love one another and to be patient and kind." Now is the time for us to put our prayer into action.

Church will be different. It will be less full than usual, and may seem more subdued and less joyful. People we would normally see might not be there. Our favorite seat might be blocked off or someone else may be sitting in it. There will be guidelines that need to be followed. But keep in mind – and in your hearts – that it is still Mass, where Christ is present in the Eucharist.

As we resume public celebration of the Mass, we will continue to live stream the Mass, which will continue indefinitely. We know we always will have people at home. The live streamed Mass is now at 8:30 AM on Sunday. The Wednesday morning Mass will be live streamed at 8 AM. Of course it can be watched later in the day as well.

Guidelines for Attending Mass

1. It is vital to practice social distancing while on our campus. Remain six feet from people who are not living in your household. You are not required to wear a mask, but adults are strongly encouraged to wear a mask to help protect others.
2. Limit congregating in groups, lengthy conversations, and respect those who choose not to visit.
3. Some pews are roped off. Do not move the ropes. If ropes are moved volunteers and staff will not know what pews to sanitize. Open pews have been strategically spaced for maximum distancing and for providing sufficient seating.
4. The cry room is closed because we are not able to properly sanitize this space between Masses.
5. Hand sanitizer is available for your use at the entrances and as you come up for Communion.
6. Place your offerings in the boxes by the entrances of the church as you enter or leave. A collection will not be taken and children will not be invited forward to make their offering.
7. There are baskets and carts in the gathering area to leave food for the Food Pantry, homemade masks for local businesses and organizations, diapers for Operation Help, and hand sanitizer for use at church.
8. The gifts of bread, wine, and water will be placed on the altar prior to Mass. There will be no offertory procession or presentation of the gifts.
9. There will not be a sign of peace exchanged.
10. The Blood of Christ will not be distributed.
11. Maintain social distancing when you are in line to receive Communion. Be attentive to the markings on the floor for guidance.
12. If you choose to receive Communion on the tongue, come to the priest to receive Communion. The priest will need to sanitize his hands after each person receives on his/her tongue.
13. There will be music. Sing in your heart. It seems the coronavirus is easily transmitted when people sing. Our cantor will be stationed away from the congregation and provide music. Hymnals will not be available. Mass parts will be spoken and you may respond.
14. Bulletins will only be available after Mass. If you touch a bulletin take it with you.
15. Initially SCRIP will not be available for sale.
16. The priest will wear a mask before and after Mass to greet you. He will also wear a mask during the distribution of Communion, as will all who assist in distributing Communion. As he is significantly distanced from the congregation during Mass, he will not wear a mask once he arrives in the sanctuary until he departs.