

May 15, 2020

Hi,

Like the angel Gabriel said to the shepherds, “I bring you good news of great joy...” Bishop Medley has given us permission to celebrate public Masses beginning May 20, 2020. **We will begin here at St. Jerome with the 8:00 AM Mass on Thursday, May 21, 2020.** However, there are a lot of diocesan and Commonwealth of Kentucky guidelines and stipulations we will be observing which will require everyone’s cooperation and patience while we adapt to new situations.

The guidelines are outlined below. These guidelines have been established out of love and concern for the vulnerable among us. We do not want this virus transmitted because of our actions.

First, let me emphasize Bishop Medley has extended the general dispensation from the obligation to attend Sunday and Holy Day celebrations of the Eucharist. So, those who are uncomfortable being in public or those who have compromised health issues due to age or medical conditions should refrain from attending for the time being. Also, if you have a temperature or feel sick, please do not attend.

Secondly, because the obligation is suspended, I would like to ask everyone to strongly consider attending “a Mass” in the course of a week instead of the norm of a Saturday evening or Sunday morning. For example, attending Mass on Tuesday at 8:00 AM instead of Saturday evening or Sunday morning.

One of the stipulations for reopening is a limitation of 33% occupancy while still maintaining physical distancing of six feet. For our church, utilizing every other pew works out to be approximately 120 people. Under normal circumstances, the average weekend attendance at St. Jerome is 750 people, so obviously not every parishioner will be able to attend a weekend liturgy. However, I am hoping our willingness to attend a Mass (Tuesday through Sunday), will allow everyone in the course of a week to attend “a Mass”.

Thirdly, we will be using an online program called “Save-A-Seat” to facilitate attendance. Each week you will be asked to select a day and time to indicate which Mass and how many members of your family will be attending.

You can access “Save-A- Seat” on our parish website at www.stjeromefancyfarm.com or with the Parish App. Each Monday you can choose and sign up for a Mass for the week.

For those who do not have online access, please call the office (623-8181) between 7:30 AM and 4:00 PM for assistance or have a family member help you.

Again, you must sign up each week. In fairness, please do not attempt to attend if you did not sign up so that those who have done so have a place to sit.

Since there are only 120 spaces available for each Mass, once that Mass is at capacity, you will have to choose a different day and time.

If people who are not working or have flexible schedules would be willing to attend a Mass during the week, it would leave the weekend Mass times open for those who are working.

If you are uncomfortable attending the celebration of the Eucharist at this time and would like to continue receiving the “Service at Home” mailings, please call the office.

What will be required and what can you expect once you arrive at church?

- All Masses will be held in the main church.
- Everyone over the age of 2 should wear a mask. If individuals are uncomfortable or children are not mature enough to wear a mask for the entire liturgy, they should worship from home.
- Sanitize your hands after opening the door.
- Hand sanitizer will be available on a table at each door in addition to extra masks and the weekly bulletin.
- Holy water fonts will remain empty.
- As much as possible keep a distance of 6 feet from others while entering and exiting the church.
- On the weekend, ushers will greet you by opening the door to enter and exit.
- We will not have Altar Servers.
- In order to maintain physical distancing, seating will be available in every other pew.
- Pews available for seating will have a red tie at the end of each pew.
- **Do not expect to sit in your usual pew.**
- With the exception of a family unit from the same household, 6 feet must be observed between people in each pew.

- If seated in the two middle sections of pews, only 3 people or a family unit will be seated in each pew. In the side section of pews, only 2 people or a family unit will be seated in each pew.
- The furniture will be removed from the cry room.
- If you use the restroom, you are asked to clean after use with the available cleaning supplies.
- We will have a cantor leading the singing.
- Worship aides will not be available.
- Baskets will be available at the doors for your offering. The monetary offering and the bread and wine will not be brought forward in a procession.
- Unless you are a family unit from the same household, please do not hold hands during the Our Father.
- Also, unless from the same family unit, refrain from extending your hand at the Sign of Peace.
- Everyone will remain in the pews for communion. The Priest or Eucharistic Minister will bring the Body of Christ to you by using every other unoccupied pew. Please keep your face mask in place until you receive Holy Communion in your hand. Then remove or lift the covering long enough to place the host in your mouth. We will not be offering communion on the tongue. The Body of Christ will be placed in the hand only.
- The Precious Blood will not be offered.
- After the dismissal at the end of Mass, exit the church while maintaining a 6-foot distance from others. Please do not congregate inside or outside and be aware that you do not prevent others from exiting as well.

The above will apply to weddings and funerals as well.

In addition to the above, the state guidelines for Places of Worship do not permit providing communal meals or beverages. Therefore, we will not be providing a meal following a funeral until further notice.

Is this the ideal situation? No

Will this be inconvenient? Yes

Will there be glitches and mistakes? Probably

Will people get mad, frustrated and irritated? No, because we are followers of Jesus Christ and we know from our Lenten disciplines how to sacrifice and practice charity and bear with one another.

How long will we have to do things this way? I do not know

Is it doable? Yes, with everyone's cooperation and patience.

There is always the possibility we will need to make some changes along the way.

As we reopen, we both know this is all new and not ideal. But I ask that you please keep in mind that the celebration of the Liturgy of the Eucharist is first and foremost the way we offer our praise and thanksgiving to God for all God has done for us and our salvation in Christ. I am confident God's grace is with each of us as you choose to continue to pray and worship in your home, participate through online streaming, or as you gather in smaller numbers. Thank you for your faith and willingness to respectfully care for one other.

Christ's peace,

Fr. Darrell Venters
Pastor

Thank you in advance for:

- Registering for a Mass
- Wearing a mask
- Practicing physical distancing
- Being patient, kind and courteous