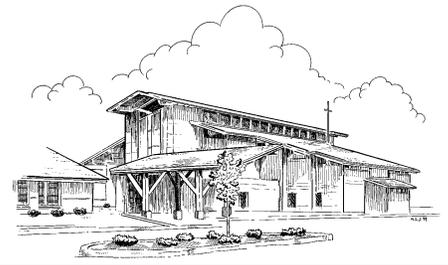


## *Church of Saint Henry*

1001 East Seventh Street, Monticello MN 55362  
763.295.2402



May 21st, 2020

Dear Parishioners,

I include the Archbishop's letter about beginning public Masses that, I am sure, you have heard about with this correspondence. Based on his letter, we will return to our regular Mass schedule on May 26<sup>th</sup>. Our first Sunday Mass will be the 5:00 PM Mass on Saturday, May 30<sup>th</sup> when we will celebrate our adult Easter sacraments. Additionally, we will celebrate a special private Mass at 3:00 PM on Sunday, May 31<sup>st</sup> for our youth confirmation candidates to be confirmed. First communion for children will take place at all Masses on June 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>.

I have read the Archbishop's letter and I too share the disappointment and frustration expressed by our Minnesota Bishops and I completely agree with their decision.

At the same time, with the bishops making this extraordinary decision to proceed forward with the opening of public Masses, this is no time to proceed with a casual attitude toward the safety of all in this time of a pandemic. First, we must continue to pray for our governor, state health officials, bishops, diocesan leaders, and those who have suffered from the pandemic. Second, we must be resolute in our determination to give witness not only to the central importance of celebrating Mass together, but to a unified desire to adhere to the prescribed safety precautions, developed with the help of medical professionals, in charity to our fellow brothers and sisters. This will, once again, call forth from us patience as we begin this new phase.

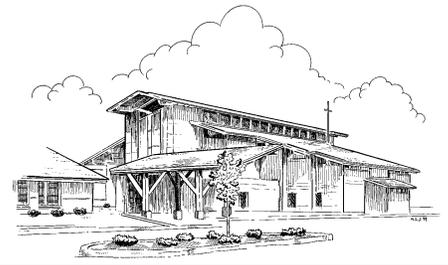
Our Archdiocese has put together a protocol for this new phase of celebrating Mass together. Please, pray that we can soon move to a less restrictive phase. I know that this letter is lengthy, but please read it carefully so that you know what to expect as we gather again. Here is a description of the provisions:

### **The Logistics for Returning to Mass and General Principles**

1. The Obligation to attend Sunday Mass and Holy Days of Obligation continues to be suspended for as long as the pandemic continues.
2. All COVID-19 positive persons, those who are symptomatic, and those living with them must stay home.
3. Those over 65 years of age and those with preexisting health conditions are advised that they should stay home during this Phase II. However, we realize that the decision to attend Mass or not is very personal and we will welcome all.
4. Please, if it is possible, bring your own hand sanitizer to use before and during Mass. Wash your hands before coming to Church. Cover coughs and sneezes with the crook of the arm. We also recommend to use the restroom at home before coming to church.
5. We will continue to offer live-streamed video and posted recordings of our Saturday evening Mass and our Wednesday – Friday daily morning Masses.
6. We will need to have no more than 325 in attendance at any given Mass. We believe that this should not pose a problem even with free attendance. However, we will move to a

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- sign-up system if this should become necessary. You may consider attending a daily Mass with smaller crowds for greater social distancing.
7. To ensure six feet of social distancing between families, we will limit seating to every other pew. We will post signs with very specific seating guidelines. For example, small or medium-sized families may choose to sit on either the left or right side of each full-length pew, leaving six feet of space in the middle of the pew.
  8. Face masks are strongly urged for all assembly members (but not for those under age two, according to the Center for Disease Control, since it may put them at risk of suffocation). Please observe good hygiene for your own mask that you may bring.

### **Safety and Hygiene in our Church Building and Worship Space**

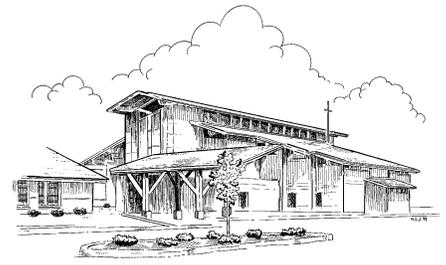
1. Weather permitting, we will prop doors open to minimize touch and provide hand sanitizer. We will enter only through the main doors of the church.
2. We do not yet have good protocol on social gatherings before or after Mass. Therefore, we will not be allowed to hold such gatherings at this time.
3. We will have a sanitizing team to wipe down with disinfectant all high use areas after each liturgy, including pews, door handles, and restrooms.
4. We will not use hymnals. We will place bulletins on one or two tables for everyone to pick up on their way out of church. However, we recommend that you view it at home on our website
5. The baptismal font and holy water stoups will remain empty. We will have blessed holy water on hand for anyone to fill their own container to take home with them.

### **Participation in the Mass**

1. The assembly will not sing during Mass as singing expels more respiratory particles than does speaking. We will however, have musical accompaniment for the Sunday liturgies. During sung worship, we ask the assembly to prayerfully and quietly meditate with the music.
2. We will have one pianist or organist and a maximum of two cantors in order to maintain social distancing in the choir area. Keyboards, microphones and other instruments will be cleaned after Mass.
3. For the procession that begins Mass, we will continue to have cross-bearers lead with the cross, then the deacon (if present) and priest(s), maintaining social distancing. Lectors, however, will be seated prior to the Mass and not take part in the procession.
4. We will not use altar servers. A small table will be located near the altar with bread, wine, and appropriate vessels used for the Mass.
5. We will not take up a collection by passing baskets. Our collection baskets will be located near the baptismal font for envelopes to be placed in before and after Mass.
6. The Sign of Peace will be discontinued at this time. Do not hold hands during the Our Father prayer.

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### **Distribution of Holy Communion**

1. Those over age 65 should not distribute Holy Communion, including priests or deacons. We must utilize younger Eucharistic Ministers in this case.
2. Distribution of the Precious Blood to the faithful will continue to be suspended.
3. We will distribute holy communion following dismissal of Mass.
4. The faithful are recommended to receive Holy Communion in the hand. However, reception on the tongue will not be forbidden, since either method poses equal risk according to health officials.
5. We will have lines for Holy Communion after Mass at each of the three center aisles with tape markings on the floor indicating six feet of space for social distancing. Communicants will proceed forward in a single line.
6. We will have a station for Holy Communion at the front of each line. Each minister will wear a face mask and apply hand sanitizer. We will provide non-surgical grade masks, for any ministers who need it, for this purpose. The faithful may apply their own hand sanitizer before getting into the Communion line.
7. As the faithful approach, the minister holds up the host and (through the face mask) says, "The Body of Christ." The communicant replies, "Amen" and removes the face mask (if wearing one) and receives Communion.
8. If a minister has touched the hand or mouth of a communicant, immediately after distributing to that communicant, the minister puts the ciborium on the table and re-sanitizes his/her hands before distribution to the next communicant.
9. After receiving, communicants may depart immediately, or pray a few minutes in the seats in gratitude for the Eucharist, then depart at leisure.
10. Communion hosts will not be distributed in baggies, cups or other pre-packaged containers. For communion to the sick or homebound, please see Father after Mass and he will set you up with a pyx and booklet.

### **Dismissal and Gathering**

The above manner of distributing Holy Communion will provide for a natural way of having a staggered dismissal that allows for social distancing. However, we recognize holy Mass as an occasion to celebrate our communion with one another and to socialize. Please consider moving conversations outside as this provides a greater degree of safety. Father will try to greet people outside.

Thank you so much for your dedication to the holy Mass. It will be difficult to not be able to sing, to receive Holy Communion as we normally do, or linger at will in the gathering space, but God will be present! As we resume Mass, we will all learn by experience what adjustments we must make. May God bless us all in ways unexpected in this next phase of our spiritual journey.

Yours in Christ,

Father Tony VanderLoop, Pastor