

## St. Joseph's Congregation

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*Very Rev. James Volkert, Parish Pastor*

*Rev. Sergio Rodriguez, Associate Pastor*

May 10, 2020

Dear Parishioners,

I hope and pray this communication finds you in good health – physically, mentally and spiritually. These have been trying months as we have seen our usual way of life turned upside down. The highlight of my days has been celebrating Holy Mass and remembering all of you. Even though you cannot be with me in a physical way, I have felt your presence in the churches. In a way, it makes me think of the early Christians when they gathered to celebrate the Eucharist in secret. Not only did that spiritual feeling of the community sustain them, it was the acknowledgement of the presence of Jesus Christ with them that helped them carry on.

As you may have heard, Archbishop ListECKI has given permission for parishes to open the weekend of May 30/31. This is the Solemnity of Pentecost. There are strict rules and directives that every parish must follow if they want to celebrate public Masses. If parishes feel they are not able to carry these out or sustain them, they may make the decision to remain closed. I feel that we are able to observe and sustain these directives and therefore will open the churches.

Another suggestion the Archbishop made was to pastors who have two or more parishes. He suggested opening the largest church first and then, at a later time, the others. This is a suggestion and not a directive. Therefore, I think it best to open all three of our churches. I am confident that we are able to open safely at all three parishes.

I have been careful not to use the word “reopen” because this, in some people’s mind, might imply that we are simply going back to the way things were before we closed. This is not the case. We are able to open safely but we must change things. I know that change is difficult for some but we have no other choice. And I also understand that you may not be happy or satisfied with the changes. Under these current circumstances, however, I earnestly ask for your understanding and cooperation.

### **New Mass Schedule Beginning May 30/31**

Saturdays: 4:30 PM St. Mary 5:00 PM St. Charles

**Sundays: 7:30 AM St. Mary 8:00 AM St. Charles 9:00 AM St. Joseph**

10:30 AM St. Mary 11:00 AM St. Charles (Bi-lingual)

Priests are only allowed to celebrate three Masses on a weekend. Priests over the age of 65 and with pre-existing health conditions must first receive permission from their physician before receiving permission from the Archdiocese to celebrate one Mass per weekend. This Mass schedule will allow Fr. Sergio and me to cover the Masses at St. Mary and St. Charles. I’ve asked Fr. Gene if he is willing to celebrate the 9:00 AM Mass at St. Joseph on Sundays and he agreed. This will be a smaller crowd and I think safer for Fr. Gene. As of this time, there will be no public celebration of weekday Masses. Weddings and funeral services will continue to be limited to less than ten people. This is by order of the State.

## 25% Capacity

One of the directives that we must adhere to is no more than 25% of our total capacity in the church for a Mass. Each of the churches will have designated seating in the pews. Attendees must sit six feet apart in every other pew. When the maximum number of people has entered the church, the doors will be closed. The chapel at St. Mary and the Cry Room at St. Charles may not be used for seating.

25% = St. Mary – 135 St. Charles – 100 **St. Joseph – 57**

All those who as defined by the health department as more vulnerable (60+ years of age, those with compromised immune systems, those with underlying health conditions, those who are anxious about being in a large group, etc.) as well as children under the age of 7, are encouraged to stay at home. Sunday Masses will continue to be taped and available on the parish websites. If you attend Mass one week, perhaps view on website the following week so that someone new may attend Mass in church in your place. **At this time the obligation to attend Mass is dispensed through July 5<sup>th</sup>.**

## Designated Entrances

The main doors at each of the churches will remain locked. We are asking that side entrances be used. At St. Mary the far north and far south entrances on McHenry Street as well as the chapel entrance. At St. Charles the elevator entrance and the entrance off the playground. At St. Joseph the east entrance and the west entrance. Using these entrances will help the ushers with seating assignments as well as make exiting the church orderly.

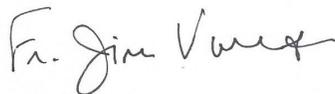
## Cleaning of Facilities

Frequently touched surfaces such as pews/pew tops, door handles as well as bathrooms must be cleaned and sanitized by CDC recommendations after every Mass. Time will be needed to clean after the first Masses of the day which also accounts for the needed Mass time changes. Hymnals, missalettes and bulletins will not be allowed. All ushers/greeters will wear masks and gloves while taking up the collection. Face masks will also be encouraged for anyone in the church. They will be available at the entrances if you do not have one of your own.

It will be imperative that we adhere to these directives. It may take a little getting used to but I'm sure I speak for all of us when I say the most important thing is that we will be able to celebrate Mass together again.

Please know of my continued prayers for all of you. May Almighty God bless, watch over you and keep you safe!

Sincerely yours in Christ,



The Very Reverend James T. Volkert,  
Pastor