

ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST CHURCH
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May 21, 2020

Dear Parishioner,

As you may have heard, the suspension of public liturgies has been lifted, and Sunday Masses may begin with the Vigil of the Solemnity of Pentecost on Saturday, May 30, 2020. Daily Masses may begin on Monday, June 1, 2020. While this is wonderful news, there are a number of stipulations and guidelines that need to be implemented and adhered to in order to make this happen, and to keep everyone safe.

First thing to note is that in early March, Bishop Tobin dispensed the faithful from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass and Holy Days of Obligation. Bishop Tobin has extended this dispensation for the faithful of the Diocese of Providence until further notice. While limited access to the celebration of Mass will be permitted, those who are elderly, have underlying health conditions, or are otherwise vulnerable to risk of infection are strongly encouraged to stay home. As painful as this may be, this recommendation serves to protect the members of our broader community who might be more susceptible to the acute risks of COVID-19. Likewise, **under no circumstances** may anyone who manifests symptoms of any illness attend the public celebration of Mass.

Please keep in mind that no directives will ever perfectly balance the right of the faithful to receive spiritual goods with the related obligation to protect the health and safety of everyone. The following directives are prudential judgements and may require continued adaptation. While not exhaustive, they do provide reasonable solutions for the challenges continuing to surface. You are asked to kindly familiarize yourself with these guidelines.

1. Masses will be held at the “usual” times: Saturday at 5 p.m. and Sunday at 8 a.m. and 10:30 a.m.
2. Church will be open 1/2 hour before Mass
3. All parishioners will be required to enter by the Myrick Street doors only
4. When Mass is about to begin, or if the maximum number allowed in Church, per Mass, is reached, the doors will be locked
5. Seating will be designated and limited. The number of people allowed for each Mass is 87, at this time (25% of the fire department stated capacity for occupancy of the church)
6. Collection of budget offering(s) will be taken upon entry into Church (No collection will take place during Mass.)
7. “Social distancing” of 6 ft. must be adhered to, except for family members living in the same household
8. All parishioners are strongly encouraged to wear masks or other face coverings for the entirety of the celebration of Mass. Cloth coverings should not be placed on young children under the age of 2, anyone who has trouble breathing, or anyone who is otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance.
9. Instructions for the reception of Communion will be given during Mass. [Keep in mind, however, that no person is obliged to receive Holy Communion. If persons are very worried about viral transmission, they may choose to forgo receiving Communion, remain in their pews, and make an act of spiritual communion.] Note:
 - a. Holy Communion may not be distributed with gloves, nor may it be received in the hand by a member of the faithful wearing gloves
 - b. Holy Communion may not be distributed to the faithful using illicit means, such as plastic cups, saucers, bags, etc.

10. To avoid congregating, parishioners will be asked to depart Mass intermittently. For the time being, prolonged visits in the church before or after Mass are not encouraged.

In addition to these guidelines, I want to assure parishioners that all seating and touch points (e.g. doors) will be sanitized before/after each Mass.

With the implementation of these guidelines, I will be rethinking when the Sacrament of Penance will be offered. The day and time will be forthcoming.

Please continue checking the parish website: stjohntheevangelist.weconnect.com for future announcements or information.

This is a joyous moment for our local Church, and I look forward to gathering again as the Body of Christ. Resuming the public celebration of Mass will look differently than before, given the recommendations of health experts, but is a moment of grace for all of us. While you are urged to take these policies and procedures very seriously and to do your best to follow them carefully, your patience, flexibility and good judgment will also be key ingredients to their successful implementation.

God Bless,

Fr. Jerry