

Message from the Pastor, Father Cocco

Hello Saint Edmond Parish Family!

Thanks be to God we are once again allowed to open our church for the celebration of Holy Mass. We are of course still under certain requirements and restrictions due to the Corona virus. Listed below are the following changes that will be in effect beginning June 1:

Please note first! Your health, safety and well-being are your responsibility and of the greatest importance. If you think your health is compromised or you have health related issues please do not push yourself to return to Mass. God is certainly a reasonable God who understands the current pandemic we are in the midst of. The Bishop has continued his dispensation from the Sunday obligation of Mass.

1. We have been restricted to an occupancy of 30% of our fire code restriction which is normally 310 persons. So 30% of that is 93 total persons. However, that number is further restricted by the State mandate that persons in the Church maintain proper social distance (6 feet apart). Only persons of the *same* family may sit next to one another. St. Edmond has 18 pews on each side of the church. If we use every other pew to maintain social distance and keep individuals 6 feet apart that would only allow for approximately 72 individual people (possibly more with same family member groups in a pew). This capacity limitation may present a problem depending on how many people return to Church under these restrictions.

2. A reminder and a thought: the Bishop has continued his dispensation of the Sunday obligation for Mass. If you would like to come to Mass during the week, when there should be more seating availability, this will count as your weekly obligation.

3. We will only be allowing people to enter through the front doors of the Church (the exception will be only for anyone who is handicapped, they can still use the handicap entrance). Entrance to the Hall will only be allowed via the south entrance, which is the door closest to the parish office building with the handicap ramp).

4. We are requiring that all who enter the Church or the Hall - **MUST** wear a mask. **No mask = no entry.** I have purchased some masks if you forget yours and ask for a donation for the mask if you are able. We will also be **requiring** all who enter Church to have their **hands sprayed with hand sanitizer** as they enter. Church will not open until 8:00am for daily Mass and 7:00am for Sunday Mass. On Sundays, the Church will have to remain empty between Masses for **disinfection purposes before opening for the next Mass!**

5. We will have someone direct you to your seat. The pews have been marked and every other pew is closed with blue tape. **Do not** at any point or for any reason touch or remove the blue tape.

6. The pews will have green dots on the seat portion of the bench which will show where individuals should sit in order to maintain proper social distance. This distance may be adjusted if a family is seated together in the same pew.

Members of the same family are allowed to sit next to one another.

7. For the time being, there will be no singing, music or use of the hymnals.

8. The priest will begin the Mass from the Sacristy and will celebrate as usual. However, there will be no presentation of the offertory gifts, no offertory collection, no sign of peace, and no distribution of the Precious Blood. Baskets will be placed at the two exit doors so that you may place your offertory donation in the basket as you leave.

9. **Reception of Communion in the Church:** After the consecration of the Eucharist, there will be a moment of silence, then the closing prayer and final blessing. During daily Mass, after the blessing, the priest and one other Extraordinary Minister will go to the front doors (closest to the altar) and distribute the Eucharist. During Sunday Mass, there may be at least four ministers distributing the Eucharist. Parishioners will file out of the pews starting from the front of the Church (closest to the Altar) single file, keeping appropriate social distance, and making their way up the outside aisles (aisle closest to the windows) towards the front of the church (altar). When you approach the priest or minister to receive communion, keep your mask on and remain a little bit away from the priest or minister while he shows the Host and says, "the Body of Christ". After you respond "Amen", approach the priest or minister, receive the Blessed Sacrament in your hand, then step to the side, away from the minister, loosen your facial covering and consume the Blessed Sacrament. Then exit the Church immediately. I am asking that all parishioners for the time being, please be considerate of your fellow parishioners who are distributing the Most Blessed Sacrament and please receive *only by the hand*. If you refuse to do this, then I will require you to wait until all others have received communion and then come forward to the priest or designated minister and receive on the tongue.

10. **Reception of Communion in the Hall:** Communion will be distributed from the back of the hall next to the two exits. After the consecration of the Eucharist, there will be a moment of silence, then the closing prayer and final blessing. The Priest and other minister(s) will then proceed to the two exits to distribute communion. Parishioners will file out starting from the pews closest to the kitchen then moving row by row from the back to the front of the Hall (altar). The pews closest to the windows will file out first maintaining proper social distance and then parishioners will file out from the same row next in the seats making up the center of the Hall. When you approach the priest or minister to receive communion, keep your mask on and remain a little bit away from the priest or minister while he shows the Host and says, "the Body of Christ". After you respond "Amen", approach the priest or minister, receive the Blessed Sacrament in your hand, then step to the side, away from the minister, loosen your facial covering and consume the Blessed Sacrament, then exit the Hall immediately. I am asking that all parishioners for the time being, please be considerate of your fellow parishioners who are distributing the Most Blessed Sacrament and please receive *only by the hand*. If you refuse to

do this, then I will require you to wait until all others have received communion and then come forward to the priest or designated minister and receive on the tongue.

11. All of this is very new to everyone! Above all, I would ask for your cooperation and your patience. The decisions on this new way have been made by me, Fr. Cocco. I am doing what I believe to be in the best and safest interest of all. If you disagree with any of my decisions that is fine. I would ask that you contact me with your thoughts, suggestions or complaints. Please do not take your frustrations out on the parish ministers who are faithfully fulfilling my plan of action. If you see something you think we have missed or have a helpful suggestion, please let me know at [302-227-4550](tel:302-227-4550), ask for Yvonne....just kidding ask for Fr. Cocco.

12. For the meantime, only the priest and the server for the day will be allowed in the sacristy. Ministers will not gather for a prayer before Mass.

In conclusion, I am so very glad that we can worship again together. It is my hope that this "new normal" will go as smoothly as possible and not last for too long. Again, I ask for your patience and your cooperation.

Thank you, thank you, thank you! So many of you have faithfully continued to send your weekly donations to the parish! It is greatly appreciated during these most difficult times that so many are experiencing. Through your generosity, we have been able to continue to give to many worthy causes in our community. Thank you and God Bless you, see you at Church!!!

Fr. Cocco