

SAINT JOHN NEUMANN ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

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OFFICE OF THE PASTOR

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

As winter began to subside, the assumption among most medical professionals was that the spread of the novel coronavirus would slow down with the warm weather. Unfortunately, the past week has seen a spike in the number of cases in several states. Some of this is related to increased testing, but some is related to behavior. It looks like we will be living with this virus at least into the late fall/early winter.

As a parish, we're surviving in many ways. The sacraments are being celebrated; volunteers are keeping the inside and the outside of our church building beautiful; our elderly are being checked in on regularly; our little ones are preparing for First Holy Communion and our adolescents will soon begin their proximate preparation for Confirmation. I'd like to think that we've been communicating well with those who wish to hear from us.

Financially, things are not so rosy. Whereas our collection was normally around \$11,000 per week, it hovers around \$6000 now. Ultimately this will lead to staffing cuts and a reduction in the services we're able to provide. But we're not there yet, and I pray (and you should pray with me) that we don't get there.

Attached you'll find a revised version of our "reopening" directives. The most obvious change involves reservations. While reservations are *still required for weekend Masses*, they are *no longer required for weekday Masses*.

As we continue to make our way through this complicated "new normal," be assured of my constant prayers for you. And please keep praying for me. Thanks!

God bless you, always!

In Christ Jesus,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Fr. Joe Cocucci, KHS". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Father Joe Cocucci, KHS
Pastor

St. John Neumann Roman Catholic Church
Plan for Re-Establishing Public Mass during COVID-19 Pandemic (Phase 1)
(Rev. 26 June 2020)

Part One: Scheduling

The Mass Schedule will be as follows until further notice:

Monday Mass:	9:00 AM
Tuesday Mass:	9:00 AM
Friday Mass:	9:00 AM (with brief Exposition and Benediction)
Saturday Vigil Mass:	4:00 PM
Sunday Mass:	9:00 AM & 11:00 AM

For the time being, all Masses will be livestreamed.

Reservations: Please read the following carefully; our reservation system has been simplified.

Weekday Masses (Monday, Tuesday, Friday 9 AM): Effective immediately, reservations are *not needed for weekday Masses*.

- You still need to arrive at least 10 minutes before the start of Mass and doors will be locked at 10 minutes before the start of Mass and you will still be seated by an usher in a specific section. See information below about masks and temperature checks.

Weekend Masses (Saturday 4 PM, Sunday 9 & 11 AM): Reservations are *still required for weekend Masses*.

- Reservation requests will be taken from Monday mornings at 8:00 AM thru Tuesday mornings at 8:00 AM for Masses on the following weekend. Reservations attempted before Mondays at 8:00 AM will not be honored; this is to give everyone equal access. The Parish will call you on Thursday to confirm your registration. Remember, since there is no obligation to attend Sunday Mass right now, you can fulfill your desire to attend Mass *on any day*; some may choose to come on a weekday instead of on Sunday for the time being.
- To register, call (410) 208 2956. If the Receptionist answers, ask to be transferred to extension 211; you will then be sent to a recorded line where you can leave information about your desired reservation. If the automated

system answers, immediately press * 211 (i.e., star-2-1-1). This will bring you to that same recorded line. Do not leave messages on any Parish phone mailbox except 211 to attempt to make a reservation. Please do not ask anyone on Staff to make a reservation for you; Staff are not able to handle reservations. A person can only make a reservation for himself, herself, or his/her actual household. Please do not make reservation requests for others.

- Keep in mind that if you show up without a reservation, it's *possible* that we might have room for you, but it's also sadly possible that we *won't* and you'll be turned away. Why take that chance? Make a reservation if you want to come to weekend Mass.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation will be administered at announced times and also by appointment. Confessions will no longer be heard on Saturday afternoons.

Part Two: Guidelines

Note: These Guidelines may seem restrictive and may be initially uncomfortable. Please understand that they will only be in effect until such time as a successful vaccine or therapeutic treatment for COVID-19 is developed and made available. No one wants to get back to “normal” more than your Pastor!

General Considerations

- Bishop Malooly's dispensation from the Sunday obligation remains in force for *everyone in the Diocese of Wilmington*. If you are over 60 and have a compromised immune system, you are at increased risk for COVID-19 and should remain home and join our Mass via livestream. If you have an existing heart or lung condition or diabetes, you are strongly encouraged to stay home for now. If you are at all uncomfortable with the idea of being in an enclosed public space these days, know that *you are not committing sin by staying at home*. If you have a fever or are showing any other signs or symptoms of cold, influenza or COVID-19, please stay at home and join us via livestream; you will not be allowed to enter the church building. If you have been exposed to the virus, you should not attempt to come to church until 14 days have passed since your exposure to the virus. *This matter of personal responsibility is for your own safety and the safety of our community. Even if you are not worried about yourself, please help us safeguard the health of others.*
- Remember that coming into the church building carries the same risk as going into any public building, despite our best efforts to keep everything disinfected.

- St. John Neumann Church will continue to livestream Mass until further notice. Mass can be joined via YouTube. The link to our parish page is www.youtube.com/c/stjohnneumannromancatholicchurchberlinmd.
- In order to comply with social distancing rules and best safety practices, there are 42 “seating sections” in the church and only people who live in the same household will be able to sit together. This is complicated but it is necessary both for your protection and to be in compliance with local law.

Coming to Mass

- The only entrance/exit that will be used until further notice is the center door in the front of the church building. No side doors will be used either for entering or exiting the church, except in the event of an emergency. This is a temporary measure. Please do not try to enter/exit the church except through the front center door (except for emergencies).
- No one will be admitted to the church building without an appropriate mask that covers both the nose and the mouth. Children under the age of two are not required to wear masks. Masks will not be provided in church.
- People are to bring their own hand-sanitizer and use it upon entering the church building. The church will not be providing hand-sanitizer on-site except to those who are ministering at Mass.
- Each person entering the church building will have his/her temperature checked; people with a temperature greater than 100° will not be given entry. If you have a fever, a persistent cough, or any other sign of cold/flu/COVID-19, please exercise charity to others in our parish community by joining us via livestream instead.
- Only people who live in the same house may share a pew; please keep this in mind when making a reservation request.
- As mentioned earlier, the church doors will open ½ hour before the scheduled beginning of Mass; ten minutes before the start of Mass, the doors will be locked and no one will be admitted. This is necessary as long as we are livestreaming Mass.
- Parents are highly recommended not to bring children under 3 years old. This is for the protection of our children and of those around them.
- Food and drink may not be brought into the church. This includes water and snacks.

- The building's restrooms will not be available. People who are not able to travel to, attend, and return from Church without using a restroom should consider joining us via livestream; the unavailability of restrooms might also be important to families with young children. This *temporary* measure is being taken to limit potential exposure to the novel coronavirus.

What Will Seem Different?

Keep in mind that much of what will seem “different” is *temporary*. Once a vaccine for the novel coronavirus and therapeutics to treat COVID-19 are developed and available, many of these precautions will no longer be necessary.

- Copies of “Breaking Bread” have been removed from the pews, along with all other materials, to avoid spread of the virus. Upon entry, you will be given the parish bulletin, which contains the weekend Mass readings. Please take it with you after Mass and dispose of it at home.
- In place of the Ushers taking up the collection, a box will be placed near the entrance to the church proper. Please place your offering in the basket as you *enter* the church for Mass.
- The only person NOT required to wear a mask during Mass is the priest, although he may choose to wear one anyway.
- One Lector will proclaim both readings; there will be no Altar Servers.
- The homily will be shorter than usual. Decreased time together – for now – means decreased potential contamination.
- The “exchange of peace” – which has always been optional, even though it takes place at most Masses – is *temporarily* suspended.
- The practice of holding hands during The Lord’s Prayer has already been abandoned in the Diocese of Wilmington.

Holy Communion

- The *Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments* has made it clear that the faithful always have the right to receive Holy Communion on the tongue if they so choose, *but we do not always need to exercise every right that we have at every moment*. If you normally receive that way, please, during this time of pandemic, strongly consider receiving in your hands. If your hands are clean and your heart is properly disposed, receiving in the hands is no less reverent than receiving on the tongue.

Please consider the health of the person who is distributing Holy Communion and their peace of mind also; *inadvertent touching of saliva and breath droplets transferred to the hand of the minister can be disconcerting and problematic.*

- Holy Communion will be distributed at the end of Mass, as follows: after receiving Communion and giving the Sacrament to the deacons(s), the Priest will lead those who are participating through livestreaming in an “Act of Spiritual Communion.” He will then pray the Closing Prayer, make any appropriate announcements, and impart the final blessing. The Deacon(s) (assisted by Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion if needed) will bring Communion to the Gathering Space. Beginning with the last rows, and directed by the Ushers, people will file out (keeping social distancing norms), receive Holy Communion and leave the church building. Please bring everything with you as you leave, as the church will be closed for disinfection once people have received Holy Communion.
- For those attending Mass physically, all Catholics who are in a state of grace may receive Communion; those who are not receiving Communion should *not* approach the Ministers of Holy Communion for a blessing, as a blessing will have been given to everyone prior to the distribution of Holy Communion.
- When you approach the minister for Communion, please remain 6 feet from others in line. When it is your turn to receive, keep your mask on and remain 6 feet away from the minister while he or she shows the Host and says “The Body of Christ.” After you respond “Amen” audibly, approach the minister, receive the Host in your hand, then step six feet away. Loosen your mask, consume the Host, and return the mask to cover your face.
- After receiving Holy Communion, please exit the church building and return to your vehicle. At this time we cannot allow for people to gather socially outside the church.
- Please do not gather in the parking lot after Mass. We still need to practice physical distancing out of reverence for each other. Ushers take no pleasure at all in asking people to move on, but until the situation permits, we will have to keep people from congregating on our parish property.

Revisions

These guidelines are subject to revision; any revisions will be communicated via St. John Neumann’s “remind.com” system. If you are not enrolled in “remind.com” you can do so by sending a brief email with your name, cell phone number and/or email address to sjnremind@gmail.com.