



Guidelines for the Resumption of the Sacraments

Dispensation and Continued Pandemic

As we return to the availability of the public celebration of the Sacraments, it is a time to rejoice, but we also need to temper that joy with realistic expectation. The pandemic is still with us. The virus is still active and there are sure to be more from our community that will become infected. The more we are around people, the more the risks increase. So, coming to Mass and participating in the Sacraments carries with it a risk. This risk should not be underestimated, particularly for those in the high-risk categories. If you, or someone you care for, is over age 65 or has underlying medical conditions, including but are not limited to chronic lung disease, moderate to severe asthma, hypertension, severe heart conditions, weakened immunity, severe obesity, diabetes, liver disease, and/or chronic kidney disease that requires dialysis, you should stay home. The dispensation from Sunday Mass is in effect until August 15, 2020. Many of the online resources that we have been using over the last couple of months will still be available. We will continue to use our Facebook page, website, e-bulletin, and parish app to communicate with you as well as post the weekend homilies. We will do our best to try and *reduce* the risk at our public activities, but this does not mean there is *no* risk. Mass, for the foreseeable future, will look very different from what we are used to experiencing.

Sunday Obligation

The idea of Sunday obligation is ingrained into our Catholic identity. This is great and holy, but during this pandemic we are dispensed from our Sunday obligation. That means if we do not attend Mass, we are excused, even if for the simple reason that we are just not comfortable coming to a public event. If you are sick at all, you are not to come to Mass. In fact, if I as the priest get sick, we will unfortunately have to cease our public worship until I recover. Our actions during this pandemic have a direct effect on everyone we come in contact with. Please keep this in mind when considering whether to or not to come to Mass.

During this time, we are asked to spread out and try and reduce our crowd size. This means we are limited to 125 people per Mass or event. With this in mind, those of you who can come during the week should think of that Mass as sufficient. You might be able to come to multiple Masses in a week, but we will need to keep our crowds down to the appropriate size. Based on the crowds we had just before the quarantine, we think we can accommodate those who wish to attend Mass without having to change our schedule, but we are open to it if needed. Numbers are very hard to judge at this point and if you have not already had a chance to fill out the questionnaire on which Mass you hope to attend, please do so for our planning. You can find the survey here: <https://forms.gle/d71aCszT8KtBJ5CXA>. Also keep in mind that jumping between parishes to get Sacraments at convenient times is not a good idea during this pandemic.

Masks and Cleaning

No matter what or when, we urge everyone to wear a mask when attending public events. We hope to have some available at our doors if you need one, but hopefully you have some for your family by now and you can wear your own. We will also need to clean after each event. We hope that a person from your family, or

yourself, can help us clean. We will have the products to use to wipe down the chairs you sit in available anytime we gather. We would also like to ask for one or two volunteers per Mass who could stay after and help wipe down common surfaces like door handles. If you can help, please call the Parish Office at 317-462-4240 and you will be added to a list of volunteers.

We will have hand sanitizer at each door, but we hope that you bring your own to help us cut down on our supply costs. I am also aware that we have some individuals with special needs amongst our community and some families have children under the age of two. If wearing a mask presents a problem for you or your loved one, please contact Fr. Aaron to make accommodations. Parents with children under the age of two can decide if having them wear a mask is necessary and/or possible. We, of course, recommend it.

Confessions

I will begin hearing Confessions on Wednesday, May 13th. I will do so from 6 pm to 7 pm on the 13th, 14th, 15th, and 16th. Adoration will also be open during this time, however, we will not be doing Exposition or Benediction. This will be the only time the church (gym) will be open to the public on those days. Confessions will be heard in the gym. I will have a station set up and we will need to practice social distancing while maintaining the private nature of the Sacrament. Masks will be needed for these times and we will ask that you clean the seats you use.

Weekday and Sunday Masses

The celebration of weekday Masses will resume on Tuesday, May 19 and weekend Masses will resume May 23/24, 2020. All Masses will follow the same Mass schedule that we typically offer. This might change if we see a need.

All Masses will be celebrated in the gym. This allows us room to spread out more. We will only have one main entrance to the gym to help us keep an accurate count of attendees. Please enter through the main gym doors under the sign, "Fr. Severin Parish Life Center". This is by the new parking lot near the playground. We have arranged the chairs to encourage social distancing. (See photo below.) Families that live together are encouraged to sit together. We have arranged the chairs to both spread us out and allow for group sizes of two, four or six. These groupings should accommodate most of our families. We understand that some families are bigger, so if possible we would like for you to sit in chair groupings close to each other without moving them to help us maintain social distancing. If you are unable to do this, then you can move the chairs you need to be together, preferably from the same row, and replace them at the end of Mass. Families can choose to hold hands during the Our Father, but we ask that you not reach out to others outside your family. We will continue to not take the option to have the Sign of Peace at Mass. I will dismiss everyone after Mass by rows to help spread us out as we dismiss. One member of your family, or yourself, will help clean the seats that you used after the liturgies are complete. The rest will make their way to their vehicle.



Please wear face masks. We will do our best to provide masks for those who do not have one yet. You can wear gloves if you choose. Before and after Mass, please do not linger. At this time, the bishops of Indiana are instructing us not to gather before or after Mass either inside or outside the church. If you choose to attend Mass, please come in and go straight to your seats and please leave immediately after you are dismissed. Again, only one person per family should stay to clean seats along with one or two designated volunteers.

Please continue social distancing. Please be conscious of space as we enter and exist the building and while we are praying our liturgy. Be patient with others as this takes more time.

Reception of Communion

Communion will be distributed by host only. As Catholics we believe that Christ is present Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity, even when we only receive either the Body or Blood of Christ at Mass. You can receive either on the tongue or in the hand, as per normal. Be conscious of your choice to receive. You can choose to attend Mass and not receive Communion. In fact, that is a good practice and not receiving Communion when you are in grave sin is required by the Church. I hope the absence of this Sacrament has made us more conscious of it as a gift. Therefore, coming to Mass and not receiving Communion is completely appropriate and even more so during this time if you want to participate in Mass but are concerned about the transmission of the virus. The graces from Mass are endless and we still receive God's grace when we participate in the Mass but do not receive the Holy Eucharist. We will distribute Communion in the middle aisle only and we will have only the priest and one other minister to distribute. You will still wear your mask as you come forward for Communion. Only lift it up after you have received Communion in the hand and have moved away from the minister. If you choose to receive on the tongue, lift the mask up for reception. Also, if you choose to receive on the tongue, please come to the priest's line.

Ministries at Mass

Ministries are not a right in the Catholic Church. With all ministries, we have requirements for ministers. During this time, we are adding more requirements to help us keep our parishioners as safe as possible. Any minister at Mass, including myself, will be required to wear a mask. We will not wear gloves, but we will be required to disinfect our hands at various times in the liturgy. I urge anyone over the age of 65 to seriously consider refraining from liturgical ministry for the foreseeable future. I have seen first-hand the damage this virus does to folks and families who do not have a chance to be with their loved ones in their last moments on Earth. This is not the time for pride. It is a time to be humble, which is the heart of ministry.

Music is suspended at all of our Masses and will be re-evaluated next month.

Altar servers will be limited in number at Mass. Most likely, only one server will be at each Mass.

Readers will be limited to only one per Mass, and again, there will only be a small rotation of folks.

Eucharistic ministers will be limited to only one in addition to the priest. In order to serve in this ministry at this time, you must be willing to distribute both on the tongue and in the hand. While I have asked that those who are receiving on the tongue come to me, it might happen that someone comes to you. If you are uncomfortable with this, then this is not the time to serve. If we distribute to someone on the tongue we will need to disinfect our hands before moving onto the next person in line.

The scheduling of these ministries during this time will be through the Parish Office. Please contact Christie Murphy at cmurphy@stmichaelsgrfld.org with questions.

Sacristans will not be required at this time. The priest will setup for each Mass.

Ushers will not be required for Mass at this time. Collection baskets will be up front during Communion and no gifts will be brought forward.

We will have volunteers at the weekend Masses to help guide us as we enter and leave the church, as we line up for the Communion procession, and as we clean.

Confirmation, First Communion, Baptism, Reception of Catechumens

These sacraments will be scheduled for sometime this summer. We will try to schedule days well enough in advance to allow families to plan. This will also allow those who need to first go to Confession, such as those being Confirmed and those receiving their First Communion, time to get that Sacrament accomplished. It's doubtful that we will have large celebrations for the Sacraments this summer and instead might spread out these celebrations over a number of Masses.

Anointing of the Sick

I will continue to be available for visits for those needing the Anointing of the Sick. You are also welcome to set up a time to come to me for anointing. If you are COVID positive, or even suspect COVID, then please notify me so that I can properly prepare to anoint you. Family members, please do not hesitate to call for your loved ones in need. I am able to get into Hancock Regional Hospital for visits, but nursing care facilities are not unified on their policies. Some let us in and some do not. If you have a loved one in a nursing facility, it helps to have you press them to allow me in to anoint your loved one.

Parishioners Unable to Attend Mass at This Time

Remember, you are dispensed from your obligation to attend Mass during this time. You have always been dispensed from Sunday obligation when you were sick and unable to attend Mass. At this time, we are still not allowing home visits by our Extraordinary Ministers. We hope to be able to do this in the future but we cannot say when. One possible solution is if you have family who will be attending Mass that you have been seeing regularly, they can borrow one of our pyxes so that they can bring you Communion. Please have them contact Fr. Aaron if they were not already doing this before the quarantine. Remember, most of the online and TV resources will still be available for spiritual help into the future.

Parish Office

The Parish Office will resume normal hours beginning in June. Our staff continues to work from home or come into the office when needed to perform necessary tasks. Nannie will be contacting collection counters about procedures into the future. **All other groups will not be permitted to meet in person in the Parish Office through the summer.**

Youth Summer Activities

We will offer programs through the school this summer to help aide families who need child care or want their children to have some enrichment opportunities. Our youth group will gather outdoors for some activities this summer. Unfortunately, the Steubenville Youth Conference and Totus Tuus have both been cancelled for this summer.