

WELCOMING OUR PARISHIONERS BACK TO CHURCH

Updated August 1, 2020

Dear Friends,

Though the number of parishioners attending Mass on the weekends continues to be modest, we are delighted to see familiar faces in our pews once again, and to be able to share the treasure of the Eucharist in person after so long a time apart.

Most of you realize that currently, our attendance is limited to **33% of the church's total seating capacity**. Our church holds roughly 700 people, so 33% of that number is 231. But the *added requirement* of social distancing by 6' actually leaves us with **far fewer than 231 available seats**. For the number of seats to change in a significant way, the 6' social distancing requirement would have to be reduced (which doesn't seem likely for now). In any case, we've been fortunate to have ample seating at all the Masses thus far.

WEEKDAY MASS SCHEDULE: *For the time being, and subject to change*
Mondays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays at 9:00 AM

WEEKEND MASS SCHEDULE: *For the time being, and subject to change*

- **Saturdays at 5:00 PM**
- **Sundays at 9:00 AM and 11:00 AM** (note: there is no 7:30 AM Mass for now)

PLEASE BE ESPECIALLY MINDFUL OF THE FOLLOWING:

1. Those who are sick or vulnerable due to age or other health conditions are **encouraged to remain at home**, and if possible continue to view the Mass on our YouTube channel (see the link on our homepage), on TV, or online. The safety of our parish family from youngest to oldest needs to be a paramount concern. Even though we're moving forward, *the coronavirus is still with us*, and is still claiming lives.
2. Bishop Barres has suspended the normal obligation to attend Sunday Mass until further notice. There is no obligation to attend Mass, and one should not feel guilty if unable to do so, especially because of age or illness.

3. **Holy Communion is being distributed at all the Masses.** The Diocese has promulgated rather detailed guidelines for the reception of Holy Communion in a manner that both reverences the sacredness of the sacrament, and also takes seriously the challenge of distributing Communion in the midst of a national and global health crisis.

For more information of precisely HOW Communion is being distributed at St. Lawrence, please read the link on the homepage of this website: **DIRECTIONS FOR RECEIVING HOLY COMMUNION.**

NOW, TO GET MORE PRACTICAL:

Please familiarize yourself with the following if you hope to attend Mass in person. We want you to feel as comfortable and secure as possible, with few surprises!

1. Since we are permitted to have a limited number of people in the building at one time, **the church looks different:** you will see colored tape blocking off many pews, and signs marking spots where you are welcome to sit. Our goal is to maintain the proper social distancing we've become so familiar with.
2. We have subdivided the church into sections: for single individuals, for couples, and for families. Obviously, we wish to have couples and families sit together; all others must remain 6 feet apart, observing social distancing.
3. The church will be closed prior to Mass to allow for proper cleaning and sanitizing.
4. **Masks or cloth facial coverings must be worn by all present, and for the entirety of the liturgy;** they will not be distributed, so BE SURE to bring your own with you. You will notice, however, that the priest, the lector and the cantor will not wear a mask during the liturgy. Children under the age of 2, and those with difficulty breathing are not obliged to wear facial coverings.
5. **All parishioners are asked to thoroughly wash their hands before and after Mass.** The priest and ministers will do the same. You may wish to bring a small container of hand sanitizer with you as well.
6. For the time being, the liturgy itself will be simplified in a number of ways:
 - a. There will be no altar servers.
 - b. The entrance procession and recessional will be abbreviated.
 - c. There will be no presentation of the gifts.

d. There will be no exchange of the Sign of Peace.

7. After the conclusion of Mass and distribution of Holy Communion, parishioners may return to their pews for thanksgiving, but all are asked to leave the church in a timely way to allow for proper cleaning of the pews, restrooms, doors, etc. Though it's so natural to want to chat with family and friends, please do not congregate in the building at this time.

OTHER POINTS OF INFORMATION:

1. Various materials have been removed from the church to lessen the possibility of infection: hymnals, prayer cards, children's Mass booklets, missalettes, and random prayer sheets. Feel free to bring your own worship aid, and be sure to take it with you when you leave.

2. The baptismal font and the holy water receptacles will remain empty. Holy water may be taken from the large canister in the rear of the church to fill bottles, etc.

AND WHAT ELSE?

1. **CONFESSION** – The sacrament of Reconciliation (confession) is available **each Saturday, from 1:00 to 2:00 PM in the Bethany Center**. Please see the material on Confessions on the homepage of this website for more information and instructions. Parishioners are also free to call the rectory for an appointment.

2. PARISH OFFICES

- The main (rectory) office is open Monday to Thursday from **9:00 AM to 4:30 PM, and on Fridays from 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM**.
- **Please note:** ALL those visiting any of the offices **MUST** wear a mask or cloth facial covering, and must be observant of social distancing. We have reconfigured the main office so that more space is provided. Visitors may need to wait outside or in their cars so that any crowding is avoided.

3. **FUNERALS, WEDDINGS, & BAPTISMS** – The celebration of baptisms, weddings, and funerals is once again permitted, though limited in attendance to 33% of our church's total capacity.

It is a genuine pleasure to see our faith community come together once again, especially around the Lord's altar, after such a long and stressful period of physical separation. The threat of the COVID-19 virus is still alarmingly real, however, and we need to remain vigilant and focused in observing health and safety directives as carefully as we can. Our community has displayed remarkable patience and grace during these past months; PLEASE continue to be patient with us here at the parish, as we gradually reassemble the pieces of our faith and worship life. Let's continue to hold one another in prayer.

My prayers and fond wishes go out to all of you!

Father Brian