

Dear Brothers and Sisters of Nativity and St. Charles,

Two months ago today, the Archbishop suspended Masses throughout the Archdiocese. It has been an incredible two months. Some of us have gotten sick with mild symptoms, others have been hospitalized and some whom we've loved have died. It has been a painful two months, but there have also been great moments of grace when we have seen the best of ourselves in taking care of one another.

Yesterday, most have heard that Archbishop Vigneron has given permission to re-open churches for public Masses as of May 19<sup>th</sup>. There is some discretion for pastors and I would like to err on the side of caution. Our Stay at Home order is in effect until May 28<sup>th</sup>. My thought is to begin public Masses on the 31<sup>st</sup> of May. That is Pentecost Sunday and a good time to return to Mass together. Please know that we will not be going back to "business as usual." Mass will be different and how we gather will seem a bit awkward. The Archbishop has given a dispensation from the obligation of Sunday Mass for all people until September 6<sup>th</sup>. Therefore, no one is obligated to be at Mass. I would caution those vulnerable seniors as well as those with pre-existing conditions to stay home until we see how things will work out. We will miss you but knowing you are safe is so much more important to us.

Here are some of the guidelines put out by the Archdiocese:

- Physical distancing is to be observed. Parishes are not to exceed 25% of the capacity for the church.
- Seating will be by first come, first-served availability. We will have designated seating using every other pew and 6 ft. distancing at each pew. Families who live together may sit together, but those who don't live together must keep their social distance.
- As we come up for communion, all will be asked to keep social distance in line as we do in grocery stores now. We will not receive from the chalice.
- The Kiss of Peace will be omitted as well as holding hands during the Our Father.
- Music during this time will be done primarily by our Music Ministers. (Health experts indicate that singing produces 6-10x the droplets from our mouths than recitation).
- Our bulletins will be available on line, but will not be printed.
- Face coverings (masks) will be required for everyone participating at Mass (even our children over 2 years old).
- Funerals and Memorials will follow the same guidelines as Sunday Eucharist, but we are unable to hold funeral luncheons after these services at this time.

The Mass schedule will be different, as well. At least through the Summer, we will only have 2 Masses. There will be no Saturday Mass at Nativity nor an 8:15am Mass at St. Charles. The two Masses will be 9:30am at Nativity and 11:30am at St. Charles. We are starting 15 minutes earlier at Nativity so I have a little time with parishioners after Mass and don't have to rush to the next Mass. The reason for only 2 Masses is that we have to sanitize everything after each Mass and to try to do that will take some time and staff to complete it. We will also continue the livestream Mass at both parishes for those who are unable to be with us in person.

I know these may seem like drastic measures and some will think it is too much but two months ago, we would not have believed that over 80,000 Americans would have died from this virus. The prediction is that 130-145, 000 will have died by August 1. As pastor of these parishes, I don't want any more of our folks to die from the virus. I ask that you be flexible and

help us with your cooperation. This is not an easy time for anyone so let's take good care of each other and protect each other. We are two great parishes so let's shine during this pandemic and allow the wonder of the Resurrection to give us new life. Much love to all of you.

Br. Ray

P.S. See the Frequently Asked Question section that follows.

**St. Charles Borromeo**  
**Returning to Mass Frequently Asked Questions**

**1. Can I sit with my family and/or friends?**

Only if you live in the same house.

**2. Can I sit in my usual pew?**

Yes, but only if you can maintain six feet social distancing.

**3. Can I sit a pew that has been roped off?**

No, every pew that is roped off has been roped off to maintain social distancing.

**4. Will we do the Sign of Peace during the mass?**

No, you must always maintain social distancing.

**5. Can I hug my friends?**

No, you must always maintain social distancing.

**6. Must we wear face mask to enter the church and during the mass?**

Yes, everyone over the age of 2 must wear a mask from the moment you enter the church until you leave.

**7. Can I feel confident that parishioners understand that they can't hug or touch me?**

We will do our very best to keep repeating the importance of maintaining social distancing and you also should also remind people of the importance of it.

**8. Will the doors and windows be open for maximum fresh air?**

As weather permits, doors and windows will be open.

**9. Will the church be thoroughly cleaned before each mass?**

Yes, the church will be cleaned and sanitized before each mass. Please help us by keeping the area around you clean.

**10. Will the mass be live streamed?**

Yes, just as it has been during our stay at home time.

**11. I am not over 65 and don't have any pre-existing health conditions but am scared about coming to church. Can I still watch the live streamed mass without feeling guilty?**

**Yes, in his letter, the Archbishop clearly stated that all the faithful in the Archdiocese of Detroit are dispensed from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass through Sunday, September 6, 2020.**