

St. Michael' Church

Phone number: 989-967-3520 Email: Parishoffice@stmikes.us

May 22, 2020

Dear Parishioners,

I am pleased to announce that the Bishop has given permission to begin celebrating the Mass beginning on May 29- if we are ready to proceed. However, this grand opening comes with several expectations and with limitations, since this is only **the 1st phase of opening our churches** to its capacity. We are able to do this thanks to your vigilance and care to control the spread of the coronavirus. I also want to thank you for your financial commitment to the parish during this time. We are able to pay our bills and provide some parish services. Thank you! Thank you!

We will begin Masses the weekend of May 30-31. In order to do so, we must meet certain guidelines required by the diocese.

I am aware that many of us who have been staying home and may not feel comfortable getting out to Mass at this time. I appreciate being fearful of large groups, not knowing who may be infected and who may not. **If you do not feel comfortable getting out-** stay home. If you are over the age of 60 and/ or have underlying health conditions, please consider waiting awhile before returning to Mass because it may compromise your health. The bishop has stated that, instead of coming to a weekend Mass, you can come to a daily Mass. He has also extended the dispensation from Mass until June 30. **I do not want the Mass to be threat to anyone's health.** We have come a long way to containing this virus, we need to remain vigilant.

Your Role in Bringing Back the Mass

First and foremost is your own health- if you are not feeling well- please stay home! Don't risk someone else getting sick because of you. Again, it is recommended that all those over 60 years of age or those with underlying health issues should stay home.

Everyone, two years and older, will be required to wear a face mask **before entering church.** The mask must stay on at all times during the Mass, except for the reception of the Eucharist. It may be lowered to receive the Body of Christ and then returned to cover the mouth and nose area of the face. We will try to have a limited number of face masks available for those who do not have one, thanks to several parishioners. **Without a mask, you will not be allowed to enter Church.**

Everyone must maintain social distancing- inside the Church and outside. The pews will be marked off to encourage this during Mass. Families, living in the same household, may sit together, but all the rest of us must remain apart. Even when outside, we may not gather in groups. **It is therefore very important to come early and go directly to a pew.** I know that we are anxious to talk with people we haven't seen in a while, but please, wait till you get home then you can either call or email them. Also be aware that your normal sitting space may be taken or blocked off, we need to practice charity during this time.

Everyone will need to bring their own hand sanitizer and use it, if need be, during the Mass.

Everyone will need to avoid contact with others as much as possible. Having said that, the Sign of Peace will be omitted during this time. While coming forward for the reception of Communion, everyone will need to likewise remain distant from the person ahead of you and behind. I ask that those who normally receive Communion on the tongue to refrain for a while- this is not part of the bishop's mandate. However, if I should touch a portion of your face or mouth, I will have to set the ciborium down, wash my hands and make sure they are dry before proceeding. I ask you to have some consideration for your fellow parishioner.

Once we have reached our seating capacity, no one else will be allowed to enter. To assure a place at Mass, we ask that you register beforehand. This can be done in one of several ways: through the on-line service *Sign Up Genius* at <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/9040a45a4a823a2f49-mass> or calling or emailing the parish

office **by Friday noon**. When entering church, there will only be **one** entrance used, thus there is need to come early. It is strongly recommended that you arrive 20 minutes before Mass begins.

What to expect when you come to Mass?

We will have parish volunteers on hand to count the number of people entering Church and making sure everyone enters with a mask. You may even be escorted to the pew, and those who do not keep the social distancing rules, will be asked to separate or leave. Certain pews will be marked off and the aisles will be marked to keep us socially distant.

We will also have parish volunteers on hand to wipe the pews and bathrooms once Mass is ended.

All liturgical ministers, including myself, will wear face masks, until we reach the sanctuary. There will be no servers, but we will have a cross bearer, a lector or two, a musician and one cantor.

There will be no song books or missal aids in the pews.

There will be no collection taken during the time of the Preparation of the gifts. A basket will be provided as you enter or leave church. You are also encouraged to give electronically, for more information, please call the office.

Other changes

Daily Masses will resume June 1st in church with all the restrictions in place. The times of the Masses will remain the same: Mondays, Thursdays and Fridays at 9:00am and Wednesdays at 7:00pm. All daily Masses will be celebrated in the church, not the chapel.

Baptisms will not take place during Sunday Mass, but privately and when they do occur, the social distancing guidelines will remain in place.

Weddings will be allowed following the social distancing guidelines and keeping in mind the limited amount of people invited.

Funerals may now take place in Church, with social distancing and limits to the number of people attending. Unfortunately, we cannot offer a luncheon following out of the safety on our volunteers.

The parish office will be open with limited hours (*please call ahead*).

On a personal note

To be honest, I must admit that I am not thrilled about wearing a mask and not being able to offer a handshake or hug. I don't particularly like the idea of the Mass losing its warmth and sense of community, but **we must take these safety measures to save lives**. And I am committed to preserving the life and health our parish community and I hope do as well. This is the reason for all these changes- we must do our part to help everyone stay well and free of this virus. We will get through these difficult times together, so please support one another- keep socially distant and wear a mask when in public.

Know that you are in my prayers and continue to keep up the good work. If you need to talk to someone, feel free to call me at the parish office. You may get the answering machine, however, I will get back to you as soon as I can.

Stay Healthy and we will get through this together... Fr. Tom