

Reopening Letter to Parish Members

As we draw near to reopening our SMSJ Parish for public Masses this letter will help guide us as we start to come back together as a parish family.

Our first weekend Masses will be May 30/31 at our regular times and our weekday Masses will start on Wednesday June 3rd at St Joseph and Thursday at St Mary at 8:30 with Eucharistic Adoration starting before the weekday Masses at 7:20am.

So, to prepare ourselves to return to Mass please read this letter over very closely as we will need your 100% cooperation as we reopen.

We would like to start with a word of Thanks for all your prayers and financial support of our parish family. Through your generosity we have been able to maintain all our bills and even though we are at only about 60-70 % of our normal contributions we feel very blest given the circumstance we find ourselves in, without the ability to hold liturgies. Thank God for our “rainy day” funds that we had on hand. So, we encourage you to continue your support not only for our parish but please continue to make steps to respond to the Diocesan Service Appeal. We are at about 50% of meeting our goal of \$26,000 with about 20% of our parishioners responding. We can easily hit our goal with the responses from everyone. Thanks to all who have responded. If you haven't yet, please send these pledges/responses into us. You can find DSA envelopes in our gathering spaces or if you prefer, you can give electronically as well on the Diocese of Lansing website. Just a reminder of ONE of the fruits of this DSA giving is the Outreach Masses that we all participated in during this shutdown.

A word of thanks to all the those who provided physical support of maintaining lawns, buildings, gardening and all those type tasks as we were closed. We are incredibly grateful.

This letter is broken into distinct areas that need to be adhered to for us to reopen. These are in place to keep us all safe, comfortable, and respectful to all our parish family as we come to worship God as a Christ centered family.

The areas of this letter are: Masses/Liturgies and Personal and Community Health and Safety.

Masses/Liturgies

As we return to our regularly scheduled Masses these are things that you will need to know about how we will temporarily function as we begin. The capacity of our church as marked to observe the “social distancing” is as follows: St. Mary church in Durand (both 5pm Saturday Mass and 11:30 Sunday Mass) will be limited to approximately 40 people each of these Masses. The St Joseph church Gaines (8:30 am Sunday Mass) will be limited to 80 each Mass.

Below are our expectations as you return to Mass.

- Doors for the church will be open 15 minutes before Mass – and will be closed monitored carefully at beginning of Mass. NOTE: Bulletins will be available ONLY on your way out after Mass.
- EVERYONE WILL wear a mask while approaching the Church and the whole time you are in the church (exceptions will be noted below)
- Everyone will enter and exit one set of doors. At St Mary these will be the doors under the carport. At St Joseph these will be the main entrance doors facing East. These doors you will find open during the entrance and exit for the congregation.
- There will be no Holy Water in the fonts, but it will be available for you to take home on request. If you need some, please see a deacon.
- You are expected to maintain a “safe distance” of 6 feet from everyone. Families who live together do not have to maintain this 6-foot rule (except when noted herein).
- Seating: pews will be blocked off to create six-feet of distance between households
- Pews will be marked as to where you can sit (seating areas). Please sit only in areas marked. Please abide by the markings/directions to help maintain the “safe distance” of 6’. Ushers can assist you with directions as well.
- There will be only instrumental music played during Mass. We are asking that there be no singing to help alleviate the spread of germs as when we sing we use twice as much breath as we normally do.
- Gloves are optional for you to wear, although they CANNOT be worn when you receive Holy communion.

- The Bishop has extended the dispensation of missing Sunday Mass until July 31st. If you are sick, or do not feel comfortable, or are at high risk of picking up a virus, please know that this dispensation is still in place to keep EVERYONE safe and comfortable. It is encouraged that if you are staying home to continue to participate in an “Outreach Mass” as fulfilling your Sunday obligation to keep the Sabbath Holy. We are planning on “live streaming” and recording our Saturday evening Mass for those to view choosing to stay at home. We will notify you on how to get to these.
- As you enter the church maintaining the 6’ distance from others, you will see at the top of the stairs near the main entrance at St Mary or on either side of the baptismal font at St Joseph, an offertory basket for you to place your financial offering in for the church. There will not be an Offertory Collection as we were used to seeing at the middle of Mass. The ushers will monitor the offerings you leave and get them dropped into our safe/locked area. The baskets will remain in these locations mentioned for access when you are coming into and/or leaving the church.
- There will be no Sign of Peace during Mass.
- Our Holy Eucharist procession will be much different than what you are used to. Here is what to expect.
 - You will be released by ushers to join in the procession.
 - You will maintain the 6-foot distance as will be marked on the floor.
 - You will move up the center isle single file
 - There will be ONLY the Precious Body distributed at two stations up front.
 - We are strongly encouraging everyone to receive the Precious Body on their hand.
 - If you are released from the side isle you will move to the back of the church maintaining the 6-foot distance and find your way up the center isle to receive the Holy Eucharist.
 - When you are about to approach the distribution station and only during the reception can you drop your mask. After you have placed the Holy Eucharist in your mouth please immediately replace your mask. The priest and deacon will be wearing masks during this distribution only.
- At the end of Mass while the last song is being played you will be released by the ushers. This will help to alleviate congestion. Please do not congregate inside the church. If you wish to talk to someone please do this outside while maintaining the “safe distance” of 6-foot.

Personal and Community Health and Safety.

We will be sanitizing our buildings on Friday’s to have them ready for weekend Masses. There are several things we will need your help with as we return to Mass. They are as follows:

- Ensure that you do not have any symptoms of sickness.
- Wash/sanitize your hands just before you enter the church and as you exit the church.
- We are asking everyone to supply their own masks, gloves (optional), hand sanitizer, and disinfectant wipes.
- We are asking each of you to clean-up after yourself. If you think you will touch any given surface, please clean it before you use that surface and as you leave your spot please clean it again. If you touch it, please clean it. Please use your gloves or wipes as you use the handrails as people will be coming right behind you to use the same handrail/door handles.
- Using restrooms should be limited. If you use them clean up after yourself wherever you may have made contact.
- Children under 7 are encouraged to stay home as they will have an extremely hard time with “social distancing” and the required hygiene needed for these times. Nursing infants are welcome.
- Masks are MANDATORY WHILE IN THE CHURCH until further notice.
- It is your responsibility to help maintain the 6-foot “safe distance” when you are near others.
- Only use the main entrances as mentioned above for coming and leaving.
- Do not congregate in the church. Keep moving directly to your seat before Mass and to your car after Mass. If you are to socialize in the parking lot maintain the “safe distancing” guidelines.

PLEASE NOTE AS TIME GOES ON, THESE ITEMS WILL CHANGE. We will instruct you when this happens.

We would like to thank you in advance for adhering to these items. In doing so you are showing love respect for your neighbor and helping to bring about an end to this situation. We lift up our hearts and thank God for the healing He has brought to our community and for His compassion on all those who have gone onto eternal life. God Bless you all.

Dcn Wayne.