



May 6, 2020

Re-engaging with Nativity Parish During The COVID-19 Pandemic

On Tuesday afternoon (May 5, 2020), Bishop Parkes announced that churches in the Diocese of St. Petersburg will be open for weekday celebrations of the Mass with a congregation starting on Monday, May 11, 2020. Bishop Parkes has not yet determined when weekend celebrations of the Mass with a congregation will resume. That announcement has triggered a host of questions about liturgies, meetings, and office hours at our parish. Here's a summary of what will or will not be happening at Nativity Parish in the weeks to come.

Please note that these directives will certainly change in the days and weeks to come. I encourage you to continually check our digital media platforms for the latest updates. What does that mean for parishioners of Nativity Parish?

Public Celebrations of Daily Mass

- Public celebrations of the Mass on weekdays will be held in the Main Church Monday through Friday at 8 am only. Morning Prayer will not be publicly celebrated at this time.
- Public celebrations of the weekday Mass in Spanish will begin in the near future. Until they resume, the weekday Mass in Spanish will be live streamed on Tuesday and Friday evenings at 7 pm. Sunday Masses in Spanish can be found on the usual digital platforms by 4 pm Saturday afternoons.
- Bishop Parkes has not yet determined when the public celebration of the Mass on Sunday will resume. Until then, he emphasizes that the obligation to participate in Mass on Sunday has been lifted.

Protocols When Coming on to the Nativity Parish Campus

- Consider using a face mask while on campus
- Refrain from shaking hands and hugging others when meeting others on campus
- Use hand sanitizer and/or wash your hands often
- Maintain a distance of six feet between you and those around you
- The church building will be cleaned after each Mass. However, it will not be possible to sanitize the facility every day. The church building will be sanitized two times a week. Entering public spaces during this pandemic carries a risk. Please be judicious and prayerful when making the decision whether or not to return to public celebrations of the Mass. Your good health and protecting the good health of others is paramount and is the foundation for making such a decision.
- Those who are elderly, ill, immune-compromised, or dealing with any other health conditions are urged NOT TO ATTEND public celebrations of the Mass and should refrain from entering our facilities as well.



NATIVITY CATHOLIC CHURCH

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Office Hours and Nativity Church Services

- Our receptionist is available in the church office Monday through Friday from 8:30 am to noon.
- Again, those who are immune-compromised, ill, elderly, or anxious about being in public during this pandemic, should ***not*** come to the office. Our receptionist will answer the phone Monday through Thursday 8:30 am until 4 pm and Fridays from 8:30 am until noon. During lunch hour and after hours, the parish answering service will respond to emergency calls related to the Sacrament of the Sick.
- As of today, most of our staff will be working from their homes. However, they are available during the work day via email or phone to respond to your inquiries.

Ministry Outreach

- Many of our ministries continue to function and serve our community. I am grateful to our volunteers who sacrifice themselves and keep these ministries running.
- If you volunteer with any of these ministries, you are asked to ***cease doing so*** if you become symptomatic, ill, are immune-compromised, elderly, or anxious about being in public during the pandemic.
- Ministries to the residents in our local nursing homes and the patients at Brandon Regional Hospital (BRH) are suspended indefinitely. The priests of the parish will anoint residents of those nursing homes or patients at BRH in emergency situations only. Requests for those critical Sacrament of the Sick anointings can be made by calling the church office – 813-681-4608.

Meetings of Ministries and Organizations

- Gatherings of groups on campus for the purpose of conducting business/ministerial meetings are suspended indefinitely. If groups or organizations need to conduct business/ministerial meetings, they are asked to do so by using a digital platform that works for the membership.
- The suspension of all ministry/organization meetings will continue until at least May 31, 2020. An evaluation will be made around that date in order to determine if that suspension should remain in effect or be lifted.
- A few outreach ministries have permission to function on campus and do so in ways that avoid/eliminate direct contact with “clients” during this pandemic.

Funerals

- We continue to offer funeral Masses and graveside services. Our parish does this and coordinates these celebrations of life with the local funeral homes.
- Funeral Masses can now be celebrated in our main church. Seating capacity for those Masses is limited to 250 people. Social distancing of those attending is also required.



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- The same guidelines in place for public celebrations of daily Mass apply to funerals and graveside services.
- To arrange a funeral Mass or graveside service, contact your funeral home of choice. They will coordinate the date and time for your service with our office staff.

Weddings

- Wedding Liturgies are being celebrated at this time.
- Seating capacity is limited to 250 for these celebrations. Social distancing of those attending that Liturgy is also required.
- The date and time of Wedding Liturgies is set **ONLY AFTER** meeting with one of the parish priests and is coordinated by our parish secretary, Gigi Garcia.

Upcoming Events – Nativity Catholic School (NCS) Graduation, RICA/RCIA Initiations, First Communion

- Our administration and staff constantly monitor the latest information and updates from the CDC, the State of Florida, local government and health officials, and the administrative offices of the Diocese of St. Petersburg. Decisions to schedule or suspend activities, as well as re-opening ministries or services, are made in tandem with those entities mentioned above. For that reason, it is essential that you continue to review the latest updates from Nativity Parish on our website and the other social network platforms hosted by our parish.
- The dates for events like the NCS graduation, the Initiation of our Elect and Candidates, and First Communion are in flux based on changing developments and conditions. Again, please review the latest updates from the Nativity Parish and NCS websites (as well as other digital platforms used by our parish) for the most recent developments.

As People of Faith...

Restarting parish ministries and services will be an uneven (and perhaps uneasy) process, to say the least. Doing so is anxiety-producing for many and on many levels. I know I can depend on your patience and kindness as we begin this process. Our staff is dedicated to making this transition as smooth and worry-free as possible.

As people of faith, we trust that God will guide us in the weeks and months ahead. During these challenging times, I am often disoriented because I am not sure of the way ahead of me. However, I am deeply consoled by the fact that God knows the way. And God's hand is upon us as we journey forward together.

Let us continue to pray for and support one another...

- *Fr. John Tapp*