



May 6, 2020

Returning to Public Celebrations of the Mass 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. What does that mean for parishioners of Nativity Parish?

Weekday Masses:

- 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.
- The 8 am weekday Mass will continue to be live-streamed on the usual digital platforms. Those who are elderly, ill, immune-compromised, or dealing with any other health conditions are urged **NOT TO ATTEND** public celebrations of the Mass.
- 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 only on Tuesday and Friday evenings at 7 pm.

Weekend Masses:

- There are still **no public celebrations** of the Weekend Masses until further notice.
- Sunday Masses in English and Spanish will continue to be found on the usual digital platforms (www.youtube.com/thenativitybrandon) by 4 pm Saturday afternoons.

Other Important Information:

- The church building will be cleaned after each Mass. However, it will not be possible to sanitize the facility every day. 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.
- Local protocols dictate that around 250 individuals can gather together in our church at one time.
- If you choose to attend a public celebration of the Mass during the week, please do the following:
 - Consider using a face mask while in church
 - Refrain from shaking hands and hugging before, during, and after the celebration
 - Bring along a disinfectant wipe to help clean/sanitize the area of the pew where you will sit
 - Maintain a distance of six feet between you and your neighbor
 - Only sit in the seats marked by the blue painter's tape



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- Follow the paths marked with painter's tape for receiving Holy Communion and for maintaining proper social distancing
- Additional preparations / protocols for participating in public celebrations of the Mass during weekdays during a pandemic can be found on the last page of this letter. (Courtesy of the Diocese of St. Petersburg)
- Bishop Parkes also reminds us that the **dispensation from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass** will continue for some time.

Resuming public celebrations of weekday Masses will be uneven and awkward, to say the least. Parts of that process will be easy. Other aspects will be different and may even be upsetting since they seem so different from our usual experience of the Mass with a congregation. I am asking for your patience 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 through this new beginning. As we resume our public participation at Mass, may we join together in praying for an end to this pandemic. Let us also pray for God's protection and blessing on all medical and professional care-givers. Finally, may God grace us with patience and peace as we navigate our way through these uncharted waters. 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.

Fr. John Tapp
Fr. John Tapp



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As we gather again to be joyfully present for the celebration of Mass, each of us is asked to do our part to prevent the spread of COVID-19. During this pandemic, we are asked to take the following precautions to honor each life given to us by God and show charity for the well-being of our neighbors.



Stay home if you are ill, elderly, anxious or have underlying health conditions. The bishop has dispensed all Catholics in the Diocese of St. Petersburg from their Sunday Mass obligation.



Maintain six feet of social distance from others who are not from the same household at all times while in the church or on church property



Show patience and kindness as parishes restrict attendance to only 25% maximum capacity inside our churches or social halls.



Use a face mask or face covering. (Face covering should be removed before receiving Holy Communion.)



Refrain from physical contact, such as holding hands during the Our Father.



Sanitize hands when entering and leaving church. Bring personal supply of hand sanitizer to use before receiving Communion, if possible.



Consider receiving Holy Communion in the hand.