

SAINT MARY'S CATHOLIC CHURCH
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ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND 20852
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Dear Saint Mary's Parishioners,

I am writing to inform you that we are planning to begin offering public Masses here at Saint Mary's Church on **Saturday, June 20, 2020**. Our parish staff and volunteers have been working very hard to establish a plan that does everything we reasonably can to make this a safe and joyful reopening for those who are able to attend.

The seriousness of this pandemic dictates that we follow the guidelines and safety measures given by State and Local authorities and health officials, and the Archdiocese of Washington. Therefore, please understand that the logistics and schedule required to offer public Masses and liturgies under these guidelines will be very different than the last time you attended Mass. Please read the following carefully to facilitate a smooth reopening.

Mass Obligation Dispensed

The dispensation from the Sunday and Holy Day obligation remains in effect and you may have to make the difficult decision to remain at home even as we offer public Masses. This would include those with COVID-19 or exposed to it, as well as those with upper respiratory or flu like symptoms or underlying medical conditions, the sick, the elderly 65 years and older, those who are living with or in the presence of any individual at risk, or those that still do not feel comfortable being in a public setting. When in doubt, out of charity for others, please stay home.

Weekday Masses

Beginning **June 22, 2020**, the weekday Masses will be offered at **7:00 a.m.** and **12:10 p.m.** Monday through Friday in the Main Church. A Saturday weekday Mass will be offered at **9:00 a.m.** in the Main Church. Only the church entrance doors by the rectory will be open.

Weekend Mass Schedule

Beginning Saturday, **June 20, 2020**, the weekend Mass schedule will be as follows: Saturday at **5:00 p.m.**; Sunday at **7:30 a.m., 9:30 a.m., 11:30 a.m.** and **5:00 p.m.** Only the church entrance doors by the rectory and by the parish hall will be open. Main entrance is for handicapped only.

Confessions

Confessions will continue to be heard on Wednesdays from **5:00 to 6:00 p.m.** and on Saturdays from **1:00 to 2:00 p.m.** in the Main Church where social distancing can be maintained. Face masks are required. **Note the change of time for Saturdays.**

Face Masks Requirements

You are required to wear face masks for the entirety of Mass. If you choose to wear protective gloves, they must be removed prior to receiving Communion on the hand. We will also ask everyone to use hand sanitizer prior to entering the church, so please bring some with you.

Liturgical Ministers

Only the priests, deacon, seminarian, lector/reader will be in the sanctuary and serving during Mass. No altar servers will be serving Mass at this time. Only a single cantor and organist will provide music at designated Masses. Congregational signing and public devotions are presently discouraged to prevent spreading the virus.

Missalettes

All Hymnals have been removed. Sunday Readings can be found at www.usccb.org. You may use your electronic device to access these readings during Mass.

Seating

Given the new occupancy restrictions, we are only able to accommodate approximately 125 parishioners per Mass. Seating will be on a “first-come-first-served” basis. We may reconsider how many Masses we can offer based on response.

When arriving at church, please keep socially distanced from other households as you enter. Please allow extra time to be seated and please understand that attendees will not choose where they sit. Everyone will be seated by Ushers as they arrive, from the front of the church to the back. Ushers will start seating 15 minutes before Mass begins. Please remain in your vehicles until the doors open to enter the church and please do not congregate by the entrance before or after Masses.

Communion and Dismissal

All Catholics present who are in a state of grace are invited to receive Communion at this time.

Those who have health concerns and do not wish to receive sacramental Communion may make an Act of Spiritual Communion.

Communion will be administered at the very end of Mass as you leave the church. This arrangement is necessary to maintain safe distances and will be facilitated by the ushers. Please pay close attention to their instruction.

When you approach for Communion, please remain six feet from others in the line and from the minister. When it is your time to receive, keep your mask on and remain six feet away from the minister while he shows the Host and says, The Body of Christ. After you respond, Amen, approach the minister.

Place one hand under the other while keeping your fingers together, making “a throne for the King,” as St. Cyril of Jerusalem says. Receive the Host in your hand, then step six feet away from the minister. Then carefully loosen your facial covering (or mask by an ear loop), consume the Host, and replace the facial covering. If the minister accidentally touches anyone’s hand, he will immediately disinfect his own hands.

We strongly encourage that those who are prepared to receive Communion do so in the hand. Although each person retains the right to receive on the tongue, the Centers for Disease Control have recommended against it; but more importantly, out of love for our brothers and sisters, and out of kind concern for the vulnerable and our sacred ministers, those who normally receive on the tongue are respectfully asked to consider receiving in the hand as a temporary measure. It is a legitimate practice attested to in our Catholic Tradition since the ancient Church. The minister will immediately disinfect his hands after each communicant who receives on the tongue, even if no physical contact is made.

As you go to your car, please keep socially distanced from other households as you leave. We will be sanitizing all pews, seating areas, and common area surfaces immediately after Mass.

Collection

Collection baskets will not be passed but will be positioned for placement of contributions near the two designated entrances of the church. Online Giving is another option available through Faith Direct. Consider enrolling today by visiting www.faithdirect.net. Our church code is **MD601**.

Restrooms and Cry Room

Restrooms in the church are closed until further notice due to the extraordinary requirements beyond our capability to maintain a safe environment and proper sanitary conditions. The cry room is also closed until further notice for the same reasons.

Please be patient with us in implementing this plan and understand that we will make any changes deemed necessary to assure the safety of those attending, while also recognizing the importance of making the sacraments available.

May the Peace of Our Lord, Jesus Christ, be with you!

Sincerely Yours in Christ,

Rev. Msgr. Robert G. Amey, V.F.

Reverend Monsignor Robert G. Amey, V.F.
Pastor