



May 19, 2020

Dear family in faith

Well, where to begin? Let's begin by acknowledging that these last 10 weeks have been anything but normal for any of us. Quarantines, isolation, stay at home orders, remote learning for your students, work at home for many and layoffs and furloughs for some. In a word, it's been tough. I want to say that it has been tough here at St. Clarence as well. I live alone everyday but with no one around for the majority of these last two months I have started to talk to the walls. I can at least report that so far, they have not started talking back yet! Its been a bit lonely to say the least.

It's been tough not having you here as well. Church is by its very nature communal and the people of God are necessary for the Good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to be proclaimed and for the charitable works of the church to be effective. In a word, I have missed you and look forward to your coming home soon. I can honestly say ministry and priesthood have been different too. The people have always been St. Clarence greatest asset and the people of Saint Clarence make faith come alive.

In that regard, we have been given permission by the Diocese to restart daily mass on Monday May 25, 2020 at our regular time of 8:30 a.m. All masses will be held in the main church. Our weekend masses will begin again on Pentecost Sunday, May 30-31, 2020. For the time being we will maintain our regular weekend schedule of masses as follows; Saturday 4:30 P.M. and Sunday at 8:00 a.m., 10:00 a.m. and 12 noon. We will re-evaluate these mass times as we move forward in our re-opening journey.

Needless to say, mass will have a different look and feel to it as we return in order to meet the safety requirements of the State of Ohio and the Directives of the Diocese of Cleveland. We are only able to begin at 50% of fire code capacity which is about 425 people. Then we must abide by the safe distance requirement of six feet. Thus, the main church has been marked off to accomplish both goals and our maximum capacity for the time being is 160 people. We can add an additional 36 in the gathering room and another 15 in the chapel. As the saying goes, "it is what it is!"

Let me share with you some other precautions that are being implemented as well.

- Everyone will enter through the main atrium of the church so that numbers can be tabulated.
- Everyone will be asked to sanitize their hands before entering the church.
- Everyone over the age of two will be required to wear a mask
- You will be asked to be seated at one of the designated, marked areas with a blue "X"
- There will be no entrance procession of ministers
- There will be no offertory procession with the gifts of bread and wine.
- For the time being there will be music but no congregational singing.

- A stationery basket will be placed in the main aisle for your offertory giving.
- There will be no sign of peace exchanged
- There will be no sharing of a common chalice for the Blood of Christ
- There will be no communion on the tongue only the hands.
- Communion ministers will sanitize their hands before and after distribution.

You will also notice that the floor of the church has been marked with yellow tape in six-foot increments for the communion procession. At communion time you will process forward as you normally would, maintaining a safe distance. When you approach the communion minister simply lower your mask below your mouth and extend your hands to receive the Body of Christ. After receiving communion place the host reverently in your mouth, replace your masks and return to your seats. I have had a couple of funerals where these guidelines have been implemented and it has gone remarkably well.

I would also ask that if you are not feeling well that you simply do not come to mass. The dispensation for the obligation to attend mass is still in effect and we ask that you not jeopardize your own health or the health of others. In addition, if you are a member of a vulnerable group, immunocompromised in any way or elderly please worship from your home for the time being. Safety is our main concern.

We have also experienced a severe decline in offertory giving. If you are able please mail your charitable donations to the church office, drop them off at the office during regular business hours. Go online to join Faith Direct or to make a one-time contribution. We rely on your generosity for the operation of the parish and its ministries. Other sources of revenue such as rental facilities and bookstore sales have also dried up. Any continued giving in these difficult times is greatly appreciated.

*** Young folks of the parish!!!! The torch, like it or not, is being passed to a new generation! Many of our volunteers and ministers are in age brackets or categories that are considered vulnerable. We need you to step up if we are to remain viable going forward. Please call the parish if you can serve as a Eucharistic Minister, reader, usher or greeter or in some other capacity. Time involvement for all of these ministries is extremely limited and you can choose which mass you are willing to serve at. This is a critical point in our history and we need you now more than we ever have before. Please step forward for service and accept a volunteer role in your parish faith community.

So, Yes, things will be different but we have acted in such a way to ease your anxiety and bring you back home safely and comfortably. We are family after all and the family that prays together; stays together. Remember the admonition of our Risen Lord, "Do not be afraid, for I am with you always."

I look forward to seeing you soon. Let's keep one another in prayer as always.

Stay Holy and Stay Healthy



Rev. Neil P. Kookoothe