

Dear Friends,

I want to inform you of the steps that we are taking to ensure a sacred, safe, and healthy return to the public celebration of Holy Mass as well as the procedures that I will kindly ask you to follow when we return. As you probably know by now, we will be set to return the last weekend of this month (**May 30-31**).

As I see it, there are three very important goals we all need to keep in mind as we return:

- Keeping our focus on the sacredness of the Holy Mass
- Making sure we are doing everything possible to stay healthy and safe
- Maintaining a spirit of patience and cooperation (remembering that we are a family of faith).

WHAT IS BEING DONE BEFORE WE RETURN?

DISINFECTING THE CHURCH

On Thursday morning, IPS-Defense (<https://www.ips-defense.com/>) will be professionally disinfecting our church to eliminate all pathogens (particularly the pews, bathrooms, doors and other surfaces that are frequently touched). After the disinfecting, they will apply an antimicrobial coating to those surfaces. The disinfecting and coating will provide long-lasting protection against pathogens. This process will be repeated quarterly as long as we need to do it. I will be sending you more information on this process so that you can learn more about it.

We will still have to wipe down the pews, railings, door knobs, and bathroom after each Mass, but we will be using fewer pews since we will have to maintain physical distance during Mass. We will most certainly be in need of "Cleaning Teams" after each Mass. Because of the antimicrobial coating, we will be able to complete wiping down the pews fairly quickly. We will simply use a spray bottle, a microfiber cloth, and water with a little bleach.

REMOVED BOOKS

In order to prevent the spread of germs through touch, we have removed all missalettes and song books from the pews. You are welcome to bring your own Mass book (e.g.

Magnificat or The Word Among Us). For the time being, holy water fonts will remain empty.

DECALS FOR PHYSICAL DISTANCING AND MARKING OF PEWS

Decals will be placed on the church floor in order to help us maintain the proper physical distance as we enter and exit church as well as to properly space us out as we receive Holy Communion. (Side note: the two types of decals have inspirational messages: “Love They Neighbor. Keep Thy Distance.” The other decal: “Faith, Hope, Love”). Pews will be marked to show where parishioners are able to be seated. We will also have to tape off pews throughout the church. Again, this is all in order to help us maintain proper distancing. ***An important note: It will not be necessary for families who live in the same household to physically distance.***

LIMITING THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE AT MASS

Because health and safety is our priority, the number of people at each Mass will need to be limited to **110**. The more space we have between one another, the safer we will be. To this end, I have decided to ***add two weekend Masses***: another ***Saturday evening vigil Mass at 7:00*** and another ***Sunday Mass at 12:30***. Bishop Tobin has extended the dispensation from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass which means Catholics are not obliged to attend Mass for the time being. ***NOTE: These additional Masses are temporary. We will eventually return to our regular Mass schedule. We may even eliminate these extra Masses sooner than later depending on attendance over the first few weeks.***

Our weekend Mass schedule will be: Saturday 5pm and 7pm. Sunday 7:00, 8:30, 10:30 and 12:30. Daily Mass will still be at 7:00am and 8:00am on Saturday.

SIGNING UP FOR MASS

The only effective way to keep our Mass attendance limited right now is to have you sign up for Mass. We are in the process of setting up a very user-friendly way to do this. Soon, there will be a link on our website and you'll be able to sign up for Mass right on our website. Families who sign up will simply be able to put their family name and the number of people attending (you won't have to register each individual). With six weekend Masses, I believe each of you will be able to attend Mass while keeping our numbers low (again, health and safety is our focus). I will notify you when we launch this sign up page. ***IMPORTANT: Please sign up for only one Mass per weekend.***

Another important note: I will notify you through Flocknote when this signup is available. Please do not call the rectory and ask if you can sign up for Mass prior to the signup link being launched on our website.

WHAT SHOULD I KNOW FOR WHEN WE RETURN?

THOSE WHO SHOULD STAY HOME

The first thing I'd like to emphasize is that I am strongly encouraging the elderly and other people who are at risk to ***please refrain from attending Mass*** when we return. I know this is a sacrifice for you, but I want you to stay healthy and safe. We will coordinate a way to safely bring you Holy Communion. Also, when we return to Mass, ***if you have any symptoms of any type of illness, you absolutely must stay home.*** Please keep in mind that we must care for one another during this time.

USHERS

Ushers will be available to help you and answer questions. They will also show you where you are able to be seated.

PHYSICAL DISTANCING AND HOLY COMMUNION

We will need to maintain physical distance not only when seated but also when coming up for and returning from Communion. We'll also need to maintain physical distance when entering and exiting the church. Decals will be on the floor indicating how people should be spaced.

For the time being, we need to change our Communion lines. There will not be enough physical space to have two lines coming up the center aisle. Therefore, we will have ***only two Communion stations***: one station for each side aisle. Maintaining physical distance, you will come up the side aisle to receive Communion, and you will return to your pew, single file, using the center aisle. Again, ushers will assist with the flow of the Communion lines. NOTE: You can still attend Mass and refrain from receiving Holy Communion if you so choose.

The ministers of Holy Communion will sanitize their hands before distributing Communion and will wear a mask while distributing Communion. The ministers of Holy Communion are not allowed to wear gloves to distribute Communion, nor are you allowed to wear gloves when receiving Communion. If the minister of Holy Communion accidentally makes contact with someone while giving out Communion, they will place

the ciborium on the table next to them, sanitize their hands, and then continue to distribute Holy Communion.

OTHER LITURGICAL NOTES

For the time being, there will be no offertory procession (meaning that no one will bring up the bread and wine during Mass). The altar server schedule is being suspended for the time being as we won't be having servers at Mass. The sign of peace will not be shared.

Ushers will not come around to take up the collection; rather, baskets will be placed at the doors of the church where you can place your envelope or cash contribution. I'd strongly encourage you to sign up for e-giving if you haven't done so. It is safe and secure and you can set it up to make your weekly contribution recurring. Here's the link: <http://www.saintpiuswesterly.org/e-giving/>

Some of you have asked about livestreaming Masses. We will continue to livestream the 10:30 Sunday morning Mass on our YouTube channel only.

A note about music: Rich Stockman will still play music for 5:00, 8:30 and 10:30. However, you are encouraged to simply join your heart to the songs, especially since you'll be wearing masks. Normally, I'd encourage you to sing louder! However, during this unprecedented time, I'm encouraging you to simply sing in your heart.

WEARING MASKS

Parishioners must wear masks before entering the church and throughout Mass. Children under the age of 2 are not required to wear masks. The only time you will take your mask off is when you receive Communion.

SANITIZING YOUR HANDS

Hand sanitizer will be available at the doors of the church; however, since sanitizer has been in such high demand, I'd also ask you to bring your own if possible. Please sanitize your hands when you enter the church and before you leave.

ENTERING AND LEAVING CHURCH

Of course we will all be happy to see one another at Mass again; however, I'm asking you to refrain from congregating (especially in the vestibule of the church) before or after Mass. Also, please do not arrive too early or plan to stay long after Mass because we will need to allow enough time to sanitize between Masses. The safest and most

effective way to exit church will be to exit one row at a time, beginning in the back of the church.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Friends, I know that this has been an extraordinarily difficult time. And while we are very much looking forward to returning to Holy Mass, we'll need to be patient and cooperative with these changes. It won't be this way forever! Eventually we'll be able to get back to some semblance of normalcy. I would ask you to be patient with me as we navigate this uncharted territory, and please be patient with one another. I'm certain that we'll have to adapt and adjust things as we return. This will be an imperfect transition, but the important thing is that we will soon be together again as a family of faith, being nourished by God's Word and the Holy Eucharist.

Be assured of my prayers for you, and please pray for me.

God bless you,
Fr. Najim