

Returning to Mass

Dear Parishioners

+JMJ

The time has finally arrived! Blessed be the name of Jesus! On May 8, the Ohio Bishops published a statement allowing us to return to daily Masses the week of May 25. We will have our first weekday Mass Tuesday, May 26th at 8am in Antwerp. Sunday Masses begin the following weekend, on the Solemnity of Pentecost. We will still be required to practice good hygiene and social distancing, however; and that will require conscientiousness and extra work for everybody.

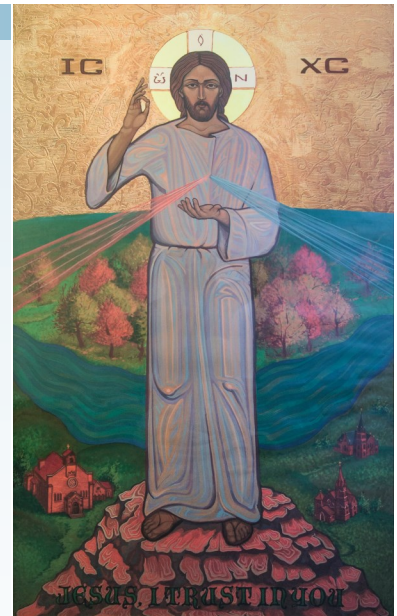
Bishop Thomas also published his own letter with guidelines for the return to Mass – guidelines that are behind what I describe below for our own parish. In his letter the Bishop thanked pastors for all they have done thus far through COVID-19. Well, in turn I want to thank all of the parish leaders who have continued to serve, even with the suspension of public Masses, so that our churches remained clean and ordered and beautiful, decorated for the special liturgical days.

The obligation to go to Sunday Mass will remain suspended until further notice – probably sometime in the fall, but nobody is sure. That means that nobody is required to attend Sunday Masses yet. In fact, the Ohio Bishops added the following paragraph, requiring prudence for those especially vulnerable to the COVID-19.

As your bishops, we continue to be cautious and concerned for those who are most at risk, the elderly and those with serious health issues. We also remain deeply concerned for our priests, many of whom we find in this category. We strongly urge those who are most vulnerable and their caregivers to stay at home, and we implore those who are not feeling well, or who fear that their own health or that of their family may be compromised, to refrain from coming to church at this time.

Because each household will have to decide whether or not to attend, I thought it would be important to let all of you know exactly how Mass will be conducted, in light of COVID-19, until further notice.

Furthermore, because so many people are involved in ministries for Holy Mass, I thought this letter could simultaneously serve as instruction for those in charge of ministries. The ministries are underlined wherever they are mentioned below. I realize what follows is a lot of information. Please call the office with any questions.



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Spiritual Communion

A spiritual communion is where we unite ourselves to God through prayer. It is a beautiful way to express to God our desire to be united with him when we are unable to complete that union in the reception of Holy Communion.

My Jesus, I believe that you are present in the Most Holy Sacrament. I love You above all things, and I desire to receive You into my soul. Since I cannot at this moment receive You sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace You as if You were already there and unite myself wholly to You. Never permit me to be separated from You. Amen.

Social Distancing

- We will maintain social distancing of 6 feet in all directions, to the best of our ability. Of course, people from the same household can sit next to each other like they usually do. We will ask ushers to remind people about this spacing as they enter church.
- No building should have greater than 50% of its fire code capacity for any Mass. If enough people return, such that there's not enough room to maintain social distancing, ushers will direct people to the halls/basement to watch a live feed of that same Mass. We will practice social distancing in those overflow areas as well. Holy Communion will be distributed in those overflow areas at Communion time.
- All Masses will be live-streamed on Facebook and the Saturday 4 pm Mass will be posted on YouTube each week.
- We ask people to use prudence, maintaining social distance in gathering spaces and outdoors before and after Mass.
- People are encouraged to wear facemasks, but nobody will be required to wear a mask, with the exception of Eucharistic distributors and servers holding patens, both at Communion time. We will have standard, light blue masks for any ministers who need them.
- There will be no entrance or exit procession by the priest and ministers. Instead, the priest and deacon and altar servers will make a short entrance and exit from and to the sacristy.
- Servers will not hold the altar Missal for the priest during Mass. Rather, the priest will say his prayers from the presider's chair using a portable podium.
- Servers will not hold candles for the reading of the Gospel, until further notice.
- There will be no offertory procession with the bread, wine and water. These elements will be brought to the altar directly from the credence table.
- There will be no offertory collection taken up at offertory time. Rather, we will have collection boxes at the entrances to receive parishioner's faithful financial gifts. We will ask ushers to collect the money from the boxes at the end of Mass and put it into tamper proof bags in the sacristy as usual.
- Ushers will dismiss rows at Communion time. We ask everybody to walk up in a single file line, rather than the two lines we are accustomed to. Also, please try to maintain enough distance from the person in front of you.
- We will notify as soon as possible those scheduling for Extraordinary Eucharistic Ministers, how many to schedule, considering which deacons will be distributing Communion.
- The Bishop is encouraging everybody to receive Holy Communion in the hand. Nobody, however, will be *required* to receive in the hand.
- Nobody attending Mass is ever *required* to receive Holy Communion. Out of concern for COVID-19, some people might choose to abstain.
- Distribution of the Precious Blood remains suspended until further notice.
- The sign of peace remains suspended until further notice.
- Holding hands at the Our Father is suspended permanently. [Here are the Bishop's words on this: *The faithful should be reminded that there is to be no physical contact (handholding) during the Lord's Prayer, a gesture that is not prescribed in the Roman Missal. This is the moment to explain to the faithful of those congregations for whom this practice has become a custom that such a practice should be permanently discontinued even after the coronavirus pandemic.*]

Sanitizing

- We will have hand sanitizer at all entrances, asking everybody to sanitize their hands on the way in and out of Mass. We ask all Eucharistic ministers to carry a small bottle of sanitizer that they can use discretely just before coming up to the sanctuary to distribute Communion.
- After each Mass, a team will sanitize the pews, the door handles, etc. We have purchased sanitizer and rags for this purpose at each campus. This is because the virus is known to stay on surfaces for some days.
- Where it applies, interior doors will be left open, to avoid repeated contact, and to increase ventilation.

Music and Readings

- Choirs are suspended until further notice. We have had Masses, however, where several people from the same household lead music. This could still be done. Or we have had a couple cantors lead music. This could still be done, if there were a couple of microphones used, to maintain social distancing.
- All Music books and prayer pamphlets will be removed from the pews, since they could carry the virus between users. We will ask sacristans at each campus to store the books in a clean and safe way for use again after the pandemic.
- Please note that the readings for each Mass will be available on MyParishApp and the USCCB website. We encourage parishioners to use their phones or personal devotional such as Magnificat, Word Among Us, or Our Daily Bread.

Getting the Bulletin

We have been publishing a weekly bulletin throughout the stay at home order, but our bulletin publisher had to temporarily suspend printing. Although they are set to resume a limited printing soon, here are some other ways you can get the bulletin:

- Call the parish office and ask for a printed bulletin to be mailed to you
- Go to discovermass.org and sign up to have the bulletin emailed to you
- Find and read our bulletin on our website or on our parish app

We will have our first weekday Mass Tuesday, May 26th at 8am in Antwerp. Sunday Masses begin the following weekend, May 30/31, on the Solemnity of Pentecost.

Closing Remarks

Please remember that we eliminated the Saturday 6pm Mass. The Mass schedule for the weekend is 4pm Saturday (Payne), 8:30am Sunday (Antwerp), 10:30am Sunday (Paulding).

Again, thank you so much for all of your patience with the suspension of Masses thus far! And, I beg your ongoing patience, as we learn how to be together for Holy Mass in the midst of COVID-19. This will take some learning, and I'm sure we will make some mistakes. Perhaps some of what I have written above will be tweaked, once we actually experience how things work. May the Lord be glorified in our faithful and heartfelt efforts to worship him again worthily in Holy Mass!

In cordibus Iesu et Mariae,
Father Poggemeyer

myEoffering

With myEoffering, you can set up your electronic donations to the church online or with a credit or debit card. You can set up the donations to match your pay periods or even send in a one-time donation.

Signing up is as simple as going to divinemercycatholic.com and looking for the green computer mouse icon. That button will take you to the myEoffering page for our church.



ReconnectToledo.org

Reconnect Website Provides Resources

The Diocese of Toledo has launched a campaign called *Reconnect* to assist parishes and the faithful as we continue to navigate Catholic life during COVID-19 and through the next phases of re-opening. Check out ReconnectToledo.org for information on what to expect with the liturgy and sacraments and frequently asked questions.

This website also has a page titled “Strengthen Your Faith” with numerous resources for prayer, families, marriage, streaming, and app recommendations.

Under “News and Media” you can find the latest messages from Bishop Thomas to the faithful as well as press releases and announcements from the Diocese of Toledo.

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