



## Saint MARY PARISH

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JMJ

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*Dear Parishioners,*

It is with great excitement that I share with you the news that with Skagit County entering Phase 2 of the State of Washington's Safe Start recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, we are now free to resume the public celebration of the Mass and the Sacraments. *Our first public Masses will be for Corpus Christi Weekend at 5:00 pm on June 13, and 11AM June 14<sup>th</sup>, followed by our Annual Eucharistic Procession for the Lord's Body and Blood on Sunday.*

*This will surely be an emotional event* for so many of us who have not been able to attend Mass or receive Holy Communion individually during this three-month "shutdown." At the same time, *there will be substantial and far-reaching changes in how we are being asked to approach the Altar of the Lord.* The Archdiocese has carefully reviewed the scientific data on how to prevent the spread of the pandemic, in consultation with the state health authorities. We willingly accept these *temporary changes* to our way of life and worship out of a deep sense of charity and concern for those who are most vulnerable among us, and in filial obedience to the Holy Spirit's guidance through our Shepherd, Archbishop Paul Etienne. These measures are based largely on the highly contagious and still not-fully-understood manner of how the new coronavirus spreads through breath and contact. Here is what is being asked of *everyone* who comes on our campus, especially for the celebration of the Sacred Liturgy. **Please read these all the enclosed instructions carefully!**

### ***Before you decide to come to Church, please note:***

- **Mass attendance will be by reservation only until further notice, and is limited to 50 people in Phase 2.**
  - o *Instructions for signing up will be posted on the parish website no later than Tuesday, June 9<sup>th</sup>.*
  - o *Also, starting June 9<sup>th</sup>, you may call or stop by the parish office during normal open hours and the staff will assist you in signing up to reserve a spot at Mass.*
  - o **You are asked to restrict your reservation for Daily Mass to no more than once per week and your reservation for Weekend Mass to no more than once per month.**
    - ***Please arrive 20 minutes early to accommodate to the new check-in process.***
  - o *The general dispensation from our Sunday Obligation to attend Mass remains in place.*
  - o *Priority seating for the next month or so will be given to the families of those receiving First Sacraments or completing RCIA.*
- **Please stay home if you are elderly or vulnerable in your health.**
  - o *We will continue to livestream the weekend Vigil Mass, and hopefully all other Masses as well.*
- **Please be aware of and follow the requirement to wear a mask while on campus.**
  - o *Those unable to wear a mask will need to remain home for their safety and the safety of others.*
- **Please do assess your own health before entering the campus to attend Mass or for any other reason!**
  - o *You will be asked to complete a short questionnaire upon arrival at Church regarding any possible symptoms similar to the virus that you may have experienced.*
  - o *If you have any symptoms at all, please remain safely at home!*
- **Please be aware of and follow the requirement to maintain a physical distance of 6 feet from those not of your household upon exiting your vehicle.**

### ***Upon entrance to the Church, you will notice many physical changes:***

- Entry will only be through the south set of disability-accessible doors.

- Please use sanitizer and then take a “Clorox wipe” to wipe down your pew *as you are seated*, as well as anything else you touch while you are here, such as the door handles to the bathroom or the exit doors.
- Seating will be spaced out for safety’s sake. Many pews will be marked-off per overall safety protocols.
- *An usher will take you to your seat. Please follow all usher directions, guidance and posted signage.*
  - o ***Your compliance and cooperation is anticipated and expected!***
- If you begin to exhibit COVID-like symptoms, please trust that you will be assisted to isolate and exit.
- The Cry Room will not be available until further notice.
- Restroom access will be *limited to two persons* at any one time.
- You will notice new physical barriers around the choir area, and the old Confessional:
  - o *Confessions will be heard in the old Confessional, in a rather unique way.*
  - o *Due to airflow concerns, the Confessional door will remain open.*
- We will also *not* be able to pray the Rosary out loud until further notice *inside* the Church.
  - o *Singing and speaking out in an enclosed space increases the risk of virus transmission.*

***Regarding the Sacred Liturgy itself, you will notice these very significant changes:***

- ***There will be no congregational singing! Please do not sing!***
  - o *We will use our new hymnals when the pandemic is over!*
- There will be no Presentation of Gifts.
- There will be no active Collection: *please use the receptacle near the entry; or donate online or by mail.*
- There will be no Sign of Peace. Please do not turn to face anyone else in your pew.
- There will be no incense used inside the Church until further notice.

**THE BIGGEST CHANGES:**

- *Communion will be distributed **after** the final Blessing, after which you will proceed directly to your vehicle.*
- *You **MUST** sanitize your hands **before** receiving Communion, **after** temporarily removing your mask.*
- *Communion will be distributed in the hand **only**.*
  - o *Please present **one (1) flat, elevated and sanitized** hand. (Please stack your hands!)*
  - o *If you happen to touch the Communion Minister’s hand, please sanitize your hands again before touching anything else. Sanitizer will be provided.*
- For all the reasons stated above, *please do not chit-chat after Mass!*
  - o *We will want to "catch up" and linger after Mass as we have not seen one another for months. This will be very difficult. Maybe consider saying to someone: "I'll call you when I get home!" so you can catch up later and score the homily ☺!*

*I pray you will believe me when I tell you that I never went to seminary to impose such incredible restrictions on our Catholic Faith Practice! No one among our volunteers or staff really enjoys enforcing any of these new measures, but we also do not want anyone to get sick, or worse die. Nor do we wish to give government officials any reason to close down Saint Mary Parish, or even the whole Archdiocese, as has happened in other places in the USA and the world! Please practice charity and prudence by observing the posted signs and complying with staff guidance.*

*This is a whole new reality, brothers and sisters, and **we must adapt!** We are confident these changes will be temporary. Updates will be forthcoming as things change. Jesus, by the Holy Spirit gives us the grace and power to overcome *any* obstacle to our Faith. It is my hope, and the hope of all your priests and bishops, that our re-engaging of our Sacramental life can be done in a safe manner that sets an example to the world of how much love we have for the vulnerable and for our wider society. I also know that your contact with Jesus in the Most Holy Eucharist and the other Sacraments will provide you with the strength you need to stand firm, with our Blessed Mother, against the forces of sickness and death, violence and prejudice, which seem to surround us everywhere we turn these days.*

*May our return to the celebration of the **Holy Mass** be a source of **healing and unity**, not only for our parish, but also for our community, our nation, and world. **Our Lady of Seattle, Undoer of Knots, pray for us!***

*Sincerely in Jesus, Mary and Joseph,*

*- Fr. Mel Strazicich, Pastor*