

MASSES AND OTHER PARISH EVENTS INSTRUCTIONS, GUIDELINES AND TIMELINES

AMID THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

ST JOSEPH CATHOLIC CHURCH

EFFECTIVE SATURDAY, MAY 16, 2020*

**this document will be updated as further instructions come from Bishop Taylor.*

Updated: Thursday, May 7, 2020

This document lays out in detail the instructions for participating in Mass at St Joseph Catholic Church in Tontitown. It will also give a timeline, subject to change, on how we will begin other activities and ministries in the parish. As with all things in the Church, our Bishop has the final word when it comes to Masses and how we are to celebrate them. I ask you for prayers and patience as we start again celebrating public Masses and slowly begin to reopen the parish.

WEEKEND MASSES

Each Mass will be limited to 125 people (25% occupancy). Every person (family) who wishes to attend a Mass must pick up a ticket in the main vestibule the week before. For example, for the weekend of May 16/17, tickets will be available in the main vestibule Tuesday, May 12th thru Friday, May 15th—while supplies last during office hours, 8:00 AM – 4:00 PM we ask that people only come to one weekend Mass per week to allow enough space for other parishioners.

Because of the limited spacing at Masses, one additional weekend Masses will be added to our schedule: 10:30am on Sunday until allowed capacity begins to increase.

Our new schedule is as follows:

4:00pm vigil
9:00am
10:30am

For those still uncomfortable about coming to Mass, remember the Bishop has kept the dispensation in place that lifts the Sunday obligation until further notice. Plus, the 10:30am Mass at St Raphael and the 12:30pm Mass in Spanish will be live streamed to Facebook.

REQUIREMENTS TO PARTICIPATE IN MASSES AT ST JOSEPH

1. Every person must have a ticket to enter.
2. When you enter please show your ticket to the door monitor. We will not be collecting your tickets.
3. You must keep a 6-foot distance between you and any other person you do not live with at all times; whether entering the church, sitting in the pews, going to communion, or exiting the Church.
4. All participants, including children over 10 years of age, must wear masks or another covering over their mouth and nose.

5. Hand sanitizer may or may not be available at the entrances of the church. We are having problems locating some. We are working on it, but no guarantees, so please wash your hands before coming into church and perhaps bring hand wipes with you
6. Parents with small children, I ask you in these times of pandemic to pay particular attention to your children by keeping them close to you and make sure they keep proper distance from others. They often have little understanding of the concept of Social Distancing.
7. Come to Mass with an open mind and an understanding that even though we are restarting public Masses again, our Masses will be different and with lots of restrictions. Look for the blessings in these changes rather than the easy path to criticize what the bishop and pastors are doing.

THE NO'S

1. There will be no Precious Blood for anyone except for the Celebrant.
2. There will be no handshake or other sign of peace that involves physical contact.
3. There will be no Communion on the tongue. Those who are unwilling to receive on the hand may make a Spiritual Communion instead. While some may view Communion on the tongue to be a "right," these are extraordinary times and attention to the common good takes precedence over personal preference.
4. There will be no water in the holy water fonts.
5. There will be no holding hands at Lord's Prayer.
6. There will be no choirs or music at Mass for the time being.
7. There will be no hymnals, music books or envelopes in the pews.
8. There will be no offertory or procession in or out of the church by the celebrant.
9. There will be no children's collection.
10. There will be no physical bulletins or any other paper documents in the vestibule. If you want to see our bulletin, we invite you to visit our website, our Facebook page or to sign up for our Grapevine emails.
11. There will be no collection. There will be a basket on the tables at the exits for you to drop your donation in. If there is a second scheduled collection, an additional basket will be there, too. We highly encourage you to sign up for Online Giving.
12. There will not be the following ministers until further notice:
 - Altar servers
 - Deacons
 - Sacristans
 - Gift-bearers
 - Usher or greeters

MINISTERS NEEDED

We will need one Eucharist minister per Mass to help celebrant. No priest, deacon or Communion Minister in a risk group will distribute Communion unless there is no alternative. The risk groups that disqualify one from distributing Communion are: age (over 65) and chronic or immune suppressed conditions at any age, such as diabetes, cancer, cancer survivor, COPD, MS, rheumatoid arthritis, chronic bronchitis, asthma, obesity and heart disease.

1. We will also need a lector per Mass.
2. At least 2 volunteers to monitor door entrances and bathrooms. They are to make sure those who enter have a ticket and everyone follows the 6-foot rule.

RECEIVING HOLY COMMUNION AT ST JOSEPH

1. Initially, we will only have two lines for Holy Communion in either side aisle. There will be red crosses on the floor every 6 feet as guides to where you should be standing in line. As the occupancy rate increases and covid-19 has peaked for a time, we will increase it to 3 lines.
2. When receiving communion have your mask on until you receive communion in your hands, step aside unto the red cross inside of a white square looking at the altar, take your mask off, consume the Eucharist, and put mask back on before getting back to the pews.
3. We ask that no one comes forward for a blessing in lieu of Communion, all are blessed together at the end of Mass.

OTHER RULES AT MASS

1. Our bathrooms will be monitored to allow only one person at a time to enter unless they are family members. All children (10 years or younger) must be accompanied by one adult or teenage sibling that lives in the same household.
2. No blessings will be offered after Mass to individuals or families for any reason. The final blessing at Mass must be sufficient.
3. Our priests will not greet you before or after the Mass. Please understand this is not because we do not want to, but every encounter increases the risk of exposure to COVID-19.
4. No coffee and donuts until further notice.
5. No congregating in the vestibule (you can go outside) until further notice.

TIMELINE FOR OTHER ASPECTS OF PARISH LIFE

- Weddings and Funerals can resume using the same restriction as on Sundays Mass currently in place. There will be no wedding decorations allowed in the pew area. A flower arrangement under the altar is permitted.
- Food Pantry is now open. Regular hours but without contact with volunteers
- Parish Office will open up to the public on Tuesday, May 26th at its normal hours of operation. Guidelines will be released by Friday, May 22nd. These guidelines will include how to come to the office and limitations on appointments with the clergy.
- Baptisms will resume in July. Contact the office to schedule a baptism.
- Daily Masses will resume the week of June 8th on a modified schedule to be released by Friday, May 29th.
- Confessions will resume at their normal times the week of June 8th. Until then, they are scheduled for 2pm to 6pm on Tuesday afternoons and 9am to 12pm on Saturdays at St Raphael.

OTHER EVENTS AND PROGRAMS

1. Special Sacraments Mass, First Communions, Confirmations, the Easter Sacraments for those in RCIA will be celebrated beginning after Labor Day. A Schedule will be released by the end of June.

2. PRE-Registration dates will be released soon.
3. News on how PRE will be taught this year will be forth coming later this summer.
4. RCIA will start at its normal time in September but with a modified schedule.
5. Youth Ministry will continue online via Zoom and other media platforms until September.
6. Wedding preparation will be by online classes only until further notice.

MINISTRY AND PARISH GROUPS, RETREATS, WORKSHOPS AND GET-TOGETHERS

All are cancelled until further notice. In order for these groups and ministries to start, state guidelines must change, and COVID-19 must have subsided enough to ensure the safety of those who participate. The earliest I can see these activities resuming is September.

FUNDRAISERS

1. Group Fundraisers are on hold until further notice.
2. Grape Festival is still to be decided and will be discussed at the May Parish Advisory Council Meeting.

OTHER MINISTRY INVOLVING CLERGY

1. There will be no House Blessings until further notice.
2. Visits to Hospital and Nursing Homes will be limited to those dying of non-COVID-19 causes and in need of the Sacraments.
3. Spiritual Direction will be limited to Facetime or another online platform.
4. Appointments with clergy will be limited over the next several months until we are sure we are well past the peak.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

We are living in different times and we will be for the foreseeable future. I have no doubt that one day Covid-19 will end, and we will be able to resume all normal activities, programs, and ministries. As Jesus says, *“Do not let your hearts be troubled, have faith in God and faith in me.”* We must learn to let go and let God. We all need prayers at this time; our world, our leaders, our community, and our families, so I leave you with this final thought. When we start Masses again on the 16th of May, each priest here at St Raphael/St Joseph will be exposed to over 500 people per weekend in order for you to receive the Eucharist. That means less than 6 feet away, face to face and probably touching some of you. So, when you want to complain about all the guidelines, restrictions and rules written in this document, especially about wearing masks, think about what your own priests are doing so you can have Jesus with you. If one of us becomes contagious, we will all need to be quarantined. Please keep that in mind as we all work together to stay healthy and safe. God bless you!

Father John Connell
Pastor
St Joseph Catholic Church, Tontitown, Arkansas

