

Dearest Parishioners,

As you know by now, the Bishops of Minnesota, as well as our own Diocesan Administrator, Father James Bissonette, in conjunction with the Lutheran Church- Missouri Synod, have chosen to permit all parishes to resume limited public celebrations of the Mass starting next Tuesday, May 26, 2020. They informed us of this decision by means of a letter which I emailed to you on Wednesday evening. It is also posted on our parish websites and the Diocesan website.

Here is the most recent statement regarding this decision from our Diocesan Administrator, Father Bissonette:

“It is unfortunate that this step was necessary. We have voluntarily lifted the obligation to attend Sunday Mass and suspended the celebration of Masses publicly. We have cooperated with the governor and his administration. The lifting of the obligation remains in force, but with our governor easing restrictions on non-essential businesses, it seems right to ease back into worship and church life as well. We see that as essential for us. With the strict protocols we have put in place, we believe we can begin public Masses again safely, in a limited way. I am disappointed that despite our best efforts to work with the governor, we remain under severe restrictions for an indefinite period of time. This does not seem right. People are wanting to celebrate baptisms, weddings, and funerals. First Holy Communions and Confirmations are placed on hold, and the spiritual life of many is suffering. We are simply asking that we be allowed at least the same opportunities for gathering to exercise our religious beliefs as businesses around us have to conduct commerce.”

Please Note that for Masses THIS WEEKEND, May 23-24, parishioners must still sign up in order to attend in-person, in order for us to duly observe the *current* restriction of no more than 10 persons in attendance. There are still spots open at both parishes. You can stop by the parish and sign up if you wish.

However, **beginning on Tuesday, May 26,** our parishes of Holy Spirit and St. Mary’s will resume the limited public celebration of the Mass. It is vitally important to note that no one is obliged to go to Mass as the obligation to attend continues to be lifted. If you are not feeling well in any way, please stay home. If you are an at-risk person due to underlying health conditions or age, I urge you to consider staying home. If you do choose to attend Mass, please understand that doing so means that you intend to observe and follow the health and safety protocols that the Diocese of Duluth requires of us. Wearing a face-mask during Mass is highly encouraged so as to protect those around you. Proper hand-washing and hygiene are expected, as are the maintaining of social distancing requirements. All of these guidelines are posted at our parishes, and hand sanitizer is readily available for parishioner use. Further, the Church will be sanitized and cleaned after every Mass.

As far as the Mass schedule is concerned, you can find it below. Seating capacity for St. Mary’s Church is approximately 320 persons, and so Masses will be limited to 100 persons, so that social distancing can be safely maintained. The seating capacity for Holy Spirit Church is approximately 285, and so Masses will be limited to 90 persons. In both parishes, overflow will

be seated in the social hall where a live-stream of the Mass will be provided, and Holy Communion will be also be provided after Mass concludes.

For daily Masses, over-population will not be an issue since daily Mass attendance in either parish doesn't typically reach the limited capacity threshold. The same is true for weekend Masses at St. Mary's in Silver Bay. Those Masses will resume according to our normal Mass schedule. At Holy Spirit, there is a need to spread parishioners out over more Masses on the weekend in order to properly observe the seating limitations, and so for the time being, in addition to the Saturday evening Mass at 4:30pm and the Sunday morning Mass at 11:00am, I will be offering a third Mass at 2:00pm on Sundays as long as this limited attendance lasts, or as long as there is a need/demand for it due to number of weekend Mass attendees. There will not be any need to sign up for any Masses in order to attend on Tuesday, May 26 and afterwards.

We will continue to live-stream one of the Sunday Masses each weekend for the time being so that those who wish to stay home at this time may still participate with our parish family in worship. **The live-stream of this Sunday's Mass, May 24th, will be at 8:30am from St. Mary's.** Please note the time-change, and remember that after the live-stream is completed, it should upload to our parish YouTube page, making it available to be watched at a later time, if desired, on Sunday.

Confessions will be heard at the previously established times before the COVID pandemic, but confessions will be heard in the cry room at St. Mary's and in the classrooms of the education center at Holy Spirit.

During this time of continued change and health concerns in our state and our nation, let us hold each other up in prayer. Please know of my prayers for all of you, and that I am very much looking forward to seeing you in the near future. I will be sending another email out to all of you next Friday to discuss the details of resuming weekend Masses. As always, do not hesitate to email me or call if you have questions. God bless you!

Fr. Steve Laflamme

Mass Schedule for Next Week:

Holy Spirit Catholic Church

Tuesday, May 26: 5:30pm
Thursday, May 28: 8:15am
Friday, May 29: 8:15am
Saturday, May 30: 4:30pm
Sunday, May 31: 11:00am
Sunday, May 31: 2:00pm

St. Mary's Catholic Church

Tuesday, May 26: 8:15am
Wednesday, May 27: 8:15am
Thursday, May 28: 8:15am
Friday, May 29: 8:15am
Saturday, May 30: 7:15pm
Sunday, May 31: 8:30am