

Reopening

May 25, 2020

Dear Parishioners,

On Saturday night, March 14, 2020, I stepped into the pulpit of our church to announce the cancellations of several parish events and programs. I ended by saying that Masses would not be cancelled until the Archbishop said so. Within two hours he said so.

For these two months, the doors of our church have been closed to most of you. We worked with Mike Forrence to set up live streaming capability in the church so that we could at least bring Mass from our church to your house. We accomplished this by Palm Sunday and so were able to live stream all the Holy Week and Easter services. We have continued to bring to your homes our weekday and Sunday Masses.

We have been in Phase 1 for a while and now the Archbishop has announced that as long as the Covid-19 numbers continue to improve, we may enter Phase 2 this coming weekend, May 30-31, the Feast of Pentecost. The reopening will have certain conditions which we will be obliged to follow. I will enumerate these for you at this time.

1. If you have been exposed to the virus or have existing health issues, especially things like diabetes, heart disease or lung issues. You may wish to stay away from the church for a while. The Archbishop continues his dispensation for Mass attendance. We will continue to live stream Mass from the parish on Sunday morning at 8:00 am. When we are allowed to visit the sick once again, we will have the Eucharistic Ministers bring Communion to the homebound. Even those who may only be bound for a temporary period.

2. For those who will be returning to church, you will notice that the church has been divided for social distancing. While the governor has allowed for 50% capacity. The Archbishop is asking us to limit our numbers to 33% capacity. For us this will mean no more than 125 people at a Mass. This number reflects the capacity of our church with the choir loft empty. There will be no admittance to the choir loft and the cry room until further notice. When you return, there will be no music until we have seen what we need to do in the future and if there is any adverse reaction to our reopening.

For the next several weeks, we need to keep track our numbers. You will need to have a ticket to enter the church for Mass. The tickets will be available on the rectory front porch. So, while you are out running errands, please stop by between 10:00 am-4:30 pm daily to pick up your tickets.....you must wear a mask and gloves at time of pickup. If you cannot stop by, email Fr. Marty at martymcgeough@yahoo.com or Elaine stjosephemmitsburg@comcast.net or call 301-447-2326 ext. 14. He will put the number of tickets in an envelope with your name on it. Please specify what Mass you wish to attend and how many in your party. When the quota of 125 is reached, no other tickets will be given out. Tickets will be of different colors and are not interchangeable.

3. When you attend Mass you will need to wear a mask and practice social distancing, both inside and outside of the church. If you do not have a mask or forget it, one will be provided for you.

1.

4. For receiving Communion, you will be instructed as to the procedure. Communion will be only given in the form of the host and until further notice received in the hand.

5. You will be advised also regarding how the dismissal at the end of Mass will take place.

We hope that these changes will not be permanent, but some may last for a longer time while others may be needed only now and may be gone during the summer. Please continue to be patient as we move forward. It is a new beginning for us commencing this week. Please pray that this goes well for all of us.

Fr. Marty

2.