

St. Robert Bellarmine

*1424 First Capitol Drive South
St. Charles, MO 63303*

14 May 2020

Dear Fellow Parishioners:

Good News! Public Mass will resume at St. Robert Bellarmine on Monday, May 18, 2020. Sunday Masses will resume on the weekend of May 23-24. Hallelujah !!!

However, the Archdiocese has given us many special rules and procedures that we will have to follow for a while. My purpose in sending this letter is to share those rules with you, so you will know what to expect when you come to Mass again at St. Robert.

But first, I must remind you that people who are elderly or have underlying health conditions are still at risk and should continue to avoid public gatherings. Archbishop Carlson has given us dispensation from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass until further notice. If you are in the at-risk group, you should seriously consider staying home for now.

If you decide to attend Mass, here are the special rules we must follow:

- We will sanitize the church before every Mass.
- We cannot allow more than 90 people to be in the church at one time.
- You **MUST** wear a mask while you are in the church.
- You must not come if you have been exposed to the virus in the past 14 days. For the safety of everyone involved, we ask you to take your temperature before coming. Stay home if you have a fever.
- Hand sanitizer will be available in the Gathering Space. The priests and deacons will use hand sanitizer before distributing Communion.
- Only one rest room will be available, and it can only accommodate one person at a time. This is to achieve necessary cleaning and sanitation requirements in a reasonable manner. Please keep this limitation in mind as you prepare to leave home for Mass.
- The Cry Room will not be available during Mass.
- We cannot use holy water when entering or leaving the church. The holy water fonts have been removed for now.
- The Sacrament of Reconciliation will be available as before, 30 minutes before the Saturday evening 5:00 pm Mass and the Sunday Morning 9:30 am Mass. However, it will be in the Cry Room instead of the Confessional to achieve social distancing.
- Our pews are positioned approximately three feet apart. To achieve the required 6-foot social distancing, we will use every other row of pews. Pews that are not to be used will be cordoned off with tape and marked with signs.
- Your family – everyone living in the same household – should sit together. Please keep six feet between your group and the one next to you in the pew. Our pews are 18 feet long, from aisle to aisle. I recommend no more than three groups sit in one pew.

- We cannot use the missalettes. You may bring your own personal missal or similar resource (e.g. *Magnificat*). The words for the Sunday hymns will be printed in the bulletin, so be sure to grab one on your way in. They will be on tables by the doors.
- We will not bring the gifts up during the Offertory. The bread and wine will be kept in the sanctuary and brought to the altar by the deacon.
- Ushers will not take up the collection. A basket will be placed on a table inside the doors. Put your envelope(s) in the basket. The ushers will bring the baskets forward at the Offertory. You may wish to consider making online donations. You can also mail your donations to the office.
- There will be no sign of peace during Mass.
- When approaching the altar for Communion, people in the same family group can stand by each other, but different groups must maintain six feet between them.
- During weekday Masses and the Sunday 7:30 am Mass, we will have a single minister – priest or deacon – distributing Communion. Approach the altar in a single-file line, down the center aisle, and return to your pew by the side aisles.
- At all other Sunday Masses, we will have two ministers – a priest and a deacon – positioned by the side aisles. Approach the altar using the side aisles, maintaining six feet from the group in front of you. Return to your pew using the center aisle.
- During Communion, you MUST receive the Host in your hand. We will NOT place the Host in anyone's mouth. We will only distribute the Host; the Precious Blood will not be given to the congregation during this time.
- We ask you to keep your mask up while receiving the Host and responding, "Amen." Then, step aside, pull your mask down, consume the Host, and replace your mask. Return to your pew, maintaining social distancing from other communicants.
- Sadly, the priests and deacons cannot greet you when you enter or leave the church. We will miss this as much as you, but it is a rule we've been directed to observe. We also ask that you not congregate in the Gathering Space before or after Mass.
- Until further notice, we cannot have any social receptions or gatherings. This means we must continue giving up the donuts and those outstanding breakfasts the Knights provide. They will return ... but not right now.

Wow! A lot to digest. But even so, it will be wonderful to return to Mass. Jesus will be with us, we can receive Him in the Eucharist, and we will be able to worship together again. This is a start. We'll get through this. Sooner or later, normalcy will return to our lives.

May God bless all of you and keep all of you safe.

Yours in Christ,



Deacon Phil