

Tuesday, May 26, 2020  
Memorial of St. Philip Neri, Priest

Dear Our Lady of the Lake Family,

“I prefer Heaven!” This was the prayer that today’s saint, St. Philip Neri, would pray over and over again and joyfully proclaim to everyone he came into contact with. He is known as the “Saint of joy” because he always radiated such cheerfulness and peace to everyone, especially in the midst of challenging times. What was the source of his joy? Of course, it was JESUS! It was particularly the Jesus he was able to make present, receive, and give in the most precious gifts of the Holy Mass and Holy Communion.

I, too, am filled with such great joy as we prepare to get back to the public celebration of Holy Mass here at Our Lady of the Lake. Getting to this point has taken a lot of prayer and preparation. I am so grateful to my brothers and sisters on the Our Lady of the Lake Transition Team who have helped me and will continue to help me make our return to Mass and our parish life of worship, prayer, and fellowship *safe, prayerful, and joyful*.

With all of this said, this important point must be made. *The COVID-19 pandemic is not over and attending Mass will not be free of the risk of contracting COVID-19.* We are going to do everything we can to follow all of the Diocesan directives along with the directives issued by the CDC for churches and places of worship. We will be focusing on deep cleaning, social distancing, and wearing face masks.

*As such, individuals who are in high-risk categories (particularly, the elderly, anyone who is caring for elderly people, those who are immuno-compromised, and those that are not feeling well right now) are strongly encouraged not to attend Mass at this time.* Do not expect that being in a sacred place will make you immune to COVID-19 or that God will prevent you from contracting COVID-19 at church. We should have absolute trust in God’s Divine Providence, but we must also recognize that God does not promise us that life will be free of suffering, sickness, and the Cross.

Bishop Persico has maintained the dispensation from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass and Holy Days of Obligation. This means that there is no pain of sin for anyone who makes the understandable decision during this time to not attend Mass in person. We will also be maintaining our live-streaming and recording of our Masses and ceremonies for those who are unable to attend.

Here are some of the particular directives and instructions that will be in place here at Our Lady of the Lake upon our return to public Mass on Monday, June 1, 2020. **Please note these are all important and will require 100% compliance. Failure to do so will mean that public Mass will no longer be available to the faithful for a time here at the parish until we all can be obedient to these directives and instructions.**

- The capacity for all Masses at OLOL will be 1/3 capacity. With the marking off of our pews the Transition Team has determined that number to be at 75.
- Everyone in the church must be wearing a face mask. You will not be permitted to enter the church without one. The ushers will be at the doors to oversee this.
- By law and ADA regulations we are not permitted to close the restrooms, but we do encourage you to please use the restroom before coming to Mass.
- Only every third pew will be utilized. That means when you come to church you will see the pattern of one pew open and then two taped off. Families are permitted to sit together in a pew. Individuals will have to maintain 6 feet social distance if they are in the same pew. Due to cleaning concerns the cry room and day chapel will not be used.
- As we transition back into Mass there will be no music ministry per the Bishop's recommendation. For Mass we will be reciting or chanting the Mass parts.
- Please plan on attending the Mass you and your family usually attend. This will help us to know how many are attending and to keep below that 100 number. Note, the transitional Mass schedule to allow for the cleaning of the church after every Mass: Sat., 4:30pm and Sun., 8am and 12pm.
- Please be understanding if you arrive at church and the building is already at capacity. You will be asked politely by the ushers to return to your car and consider attending another weekend Mass and/or to attend a daily Mass that week.
- Please be prepared to be escorted to your seat by the ushers. This is necessary to maintain capacity numbers and social distancing.
- There will be no hymnals in the pews. If you would like to bring your own missal/prayer book you are welcome to do so. Please remember to take it home with you though.
- There will be no traditional collection taken. The collection basket will be placed in the empty Baptismal Font. We ask that you please place your offertory giving in that basket upon entering or leaving the church.
- There will be ample hand sanitizer available in the church, but you are encouraged to bring your own mini bottles if you have them.
- To maintain social distancing, you will be dismissed from Mass pew by pew by the ushers and encouraged to go straight to your cars and not congregate in the parking lot after Mass.

- **The procedure for Holy Communion will be as follows:**
  - **Only one pew will be permitted to approach the altar to receive Holy Communion at a time. This will be guided by our ushers.**
  - **Once you are out of the pew please stand at the appropriate X on the floor to maintain social distancing. Please maintain a single-file line.**
  - **There will be a hand sanitizer station immediately before you receive Holy Communion. Please use it before you receive the Sacred Host.**
  - **We strongly advise only receiving in the hand during this time, but your right to receive on the tongue will be respected and maintained.**
  - **You must wear your face mask as you approach Deacon David or me to receive Holy Communion. Once you get up to one of us you can pull down your face mask, receive Holy Communion, and then pull your face mask back up and return to your seat. Please do not approach Deacon David or me until the previous person has received and returned to their pew.**
  - **Any accidental touching of a person's hand or any part of their person by Deacon David or me as we are distributing Holy Communion will cause us to immediately stop distributing for a moment, wash our hands, and then resume the distribution of Holy Communion.**
  - **Deacon David and I will be wearing face masks as we distribute Holy Communion.**

I know this is a lot! Please read and familiarize yourself with these directives and instructions well before you come back to Mass. The Transition Team and I also ask for your patience, understanding, and flexibility during this transition time. We have not experienced anything like this before and we are all learning. I really liked this message from a neighboring church: "Remember, our purpose is to worship and receive the LORD and grow spiritually. Please come with a heart of worship and not a heart of critiquing. We are all struggling through this together."

I am so excited to see you all soon whether it is in person or through our live-stream and recorded Masses and services. I have missed you all so much and look forward to this first step as we return to pray, worship, and receive Jesus together again. Like St. Philip Neri, HE is the source of our unending joy and peace. "I prefer Heaven!" I love you all!

Peace of Christ to you all!

Rev. Daniel R. Hoffman  
Pastor