

Dear parish family,

Christ Our Light shines ever more brightly as we continue this Easter season, and we continue to rejoice through the words of the Mass, He is Risen, Alleluia, Alleluia! Fr. Adams and I are so glad to write you this letter, and let you know how Sacred Heart is responding to the recent statements of the Governor and our own Bishop Strickland. From the outset, we ask you to pray for our world and our parish, for an end to this scourge of COVID-19, and for a new fire of evangelization in our words and actions, to bring the light of Christ to the world!

Bishop Strickland wrote a brief letter and gave us priests a set of guidelines for beginning to “open wide the doors of Christ” here at our parish to you the faithful, effective Friday, May 1<sup>st</sup> 2020. These guidelines speak to the very real necessity for all of us and individuals and collectively to take serious this pandemic, and to not relax our vigilance in caring for our neighbor. At the same time, with a shepherd’s heart, he and we, your parish priests, realize the great desire you all have to return to some sense of normalcy in life, and especially to return to regular celebration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and to receive Holy Communion.

In light of this, Bishop Strickland has proposed to us the possibility of opening up our parish Church to 25% of its normal capacity for the celebration of public liturgy, i.e., the Mass and Adoration. While executing this will take some adjusting on our part and yours, we hope that by providing this letter and the guidelines that accompany it, you will all be able to return to the regular celebration of the sacramental life of the Bride of Christ, the Church.

First, it **MUST** be clear: Bishop Strickland has continued to dispense the **OBLIGATION** to attend the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass; in other words, you are not sinning if you miss Sunday Mass right now. He especially emphasizes that those who are 65 and older, who have underlying health conditions, and those who are sick should continue to shelter-in-place for as long as you see fit. Of course, he understands that many of you will want to return, and we certainly encourage you to come if you feel well and are able to make it. However, out of an abundance of caution, we want to encourage those of you who may be in this demographic to consider maybe coming to one of the daily masses during the week if you absolutely feel the desire to come, as the weekend masses will tend to be more crowded (we hope!).

Secondly, Bishop Strickland has strongly encouraged the wearing of Personal Protective Equipment when you attend Holy Mass: facemasks and gloves are perfectly reasonable in these times. They are not required, but we do urge you, especially if you are more vulnerable to the ill-effects of this virus, to take reasonable pre-caution in preparation for participating in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

Thirdly, Bishop Strickland has asked us to restrict Holy Communion to one species (the Sacred Host) for the time being; you can receive Holy Communion on the tongue or in the hand; Bishop Strickland has encouraged communion in the hand, but can still receive either way; also, the sign of peace (not obliged) is to be done only with immediate family.

In an effort as a parish to continue to provide as much as we can, we are taking the following steps effective Friday, May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020:

Schedule of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass:

Sunday: 8:30am-English, 10:30am-English, 12:30pm-Spanish; Adoration and Confessions 3-4pm

Monday: 12:05pm-English

Tuesday: 12:05pm-English; 6:00pm-English

Wednesday: 12:05pm-English; 6:00pm-Spanish

Thursday: 9:00am-English; 12:05pm-English; 6:00pm-Traditional Latin Mass

Friday: 9:00am-English; 12:05pm-English; 5:30pm-English; Adoration all day between masses

Saturday: 9:00am-English; 5:30pm-English; 7:00pm-Spanish\*

(for the time being, we will have this additional Spanish Mass to accommodate our community)

Confessions: anytime by appointment

Regular Hours: Friday after 9am Mass; Saturday 8-9am; Saturday 4-5pm; Sunday 3-4pm

Office Hours

We encourage all parishioners to take seriously the need to continue to social distance, but we also know certain things need to be done in person at the Church. Please feel free to come by but be aware that your visits to the best of your ability should be scheduled. The office will be open Monday-Friday from 8:30am-5pm, and normally is closed from 12pm-2pm for lunch. Our wonderful staff is here to help you!

Sacramental Needs

Fr. Adams and Fr. Braun continue to remain available for Anointing of the Sick and Communion Calls as needed (the stress is on need, not want). If you have a child to be baptized, please contact our office and we will be in touch. Bishop Strickland has asked that we work with our faith formation leaders to develop a plan in terms of making sure our candidates for full communion with the Church and our young people who are preparing to receive the Sacraments of Initiation will be prepared to do so sometime this summer. Please be patient and look for more information about this in the coming weeks.

Livestream Liturgy

To continue to reach those who are not able to come to Mass, we will continue to Livestream our daily mass at 12:05pm, Monday-Friday, and we will Livestream the 10:30am and 12:30pm on Sundays, as well as the Sunday Holy Hour from 3-4pm.

## General Guidance

We know that all of you are anxious to come to attend the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and to “get back to normal” and we want to help you make this transition as smoothly and safely as possible. However, getting “back to normal” is going to take a long time, and we need to be good Catholics and good citizens in helping to do this with faith AND reason. That being said, we want to offer the following general guidance:

1. Out of respect for those who work during the week, we would strongly encourage our retired folks, those whose schedule permits them greater flexibility, and those who live alone to come to Mass during the week. Remember, the obligation to attend has been suspended, and this small gesture of kindness will permit those who do work during the week to come on the weekends and not worry about being able to get to mass.
2. If you have been sick, with anything, please wait a minimum of 3 days after full recovery, and a minimum of 7 days since symptoms first appeared before coming to the Holy Mass. If you are showing symptoms or have been diagnosed with COVID-19, please follow the protocols of public health officials and your doctor.
3. We will have a collection basket in the Narthex where you can drop off your collections (please do not touch the basket). Our ushers will watch it vigilantly and will put it in the usual money bag under lock and key immediately following mass. Please try to remember to drop your donations off when you come into Church.
4. PLEASE DO NOT TOUCH DOORS. The doors will be manned by the ushers, and they will also be seating you as you come into the Church, following the protocols Bishop Strickland gave the church. Every other pew will be blocked off, and we will seat individuals and families respecting social distancing protocols.
5. During the week, the side door to the Church near the office will be unlocked and open. All other doors will remain locked and closed. Please enter and exit through this door only. We again encourage the wearing of gloves, but will be sanitizing and disinfecting surfaces, door handles, and bathrooms daily.

We look forward to welcoming you to your parish home and encourage you to come with hearts full of joy-not fear! We have planned for extra-attendance in the parish hall if needed, as we expect and pray that many of you will want to return to regular celebration of the Mass ASAP. As stated above, we are doing all we can to make this a good, healthy, and life-giving opportunity for all of you, and ask that you be patient and exercise due diligence as individuals and families as we “open wide the doors to Christ”. Please be assured of our prayers for you at the altar, and we will see you soon!

Sacred Heart Clergy and Staff