

Saint Joseph CATHOLIC CHURCH

November 20, 2020

Friday of the Thirty-Third Week of Ordinary Time

Dear Parishioners of St. Joseph Parish:

I hope that this note finds you and your families remaining healthy! Unfortunately, we know that our state is in the midst of a spike of COVID-19 cases. As you are most probably aware, Cuyahoga County was placed under a Stay at Home Advisory through, at least, December 17. **Given this reality, we will scale back our Parish Office Hours (now through January 4, we will only be open Monday and Wednesday 9am-5pm and Friday 9am-Noon) but continue our entire liturgical schedule as normal. In addition, our Eucharistic Chapel will remain open for prayer.** Our Parish Staff remains committed to doing everything that we can to provide a safe environment here at St. Joseph. We continue to regularly clean, sanitize, and disinfect the church, Gathering Area, restrooms, offices, and other spaces as they are used. We wear masks or other facial coverings when we interact with you. During this time of renewed concern, I cannot emphasize the importance of being mindful of what has been asked of all Catholics and parishes by the Diocese out of charity for one another:

- If you or a family member is in a high-risk group, remember that our 10am Mass each Sunday is live-streamed at www.sjohio.org/live. In addition, the Diocese live-streams Noon Mass Monday through Friday at www.dioceseofcleveland.org and beginning this Sunday, the Diocesan TV Mass will now be available on WUAB – the CW43 – at 10am every Sunday. These opportunities provide a safe manner for you to participate in Mass. Each of our live-streams does contain the Spiritual Communion Prayer, which may also be found in the bulletin.
- Prior to coming to Mass, please continue to self-monitor for signs of illness: especially a fever of 100.4, cough, or shortness of breath; if these are present, you should not come to Mass and perhaps consider a follow-up with your medical provider.
- From your arrival at church and until you leave, we have again been reminded that Catholics above the age of two are obligated to wear a face-covering the entire time while in the building, except for the reception of Holy Communion. One special note is that those with medical conditions, such as severe asthma or COPD would be exempt from this obligation. When approaching for Communion, please leave your mask on until after the priest or Eucharistic Minister places the host into your hand; then step to the side, remove your mask, and place the host in your mouth, and replace your mask.
- While COVID-19 protocols still discourage full-throated singing by the assembly and choirs of full hymns during Mass, beginning the First Sunday of Advent, our cantors will begin singing the shorter acclamations (*Alleluia, Holy Holy Holy, Memorial Acclamation, Great Amen, Lamb of God*) once again, lest we forget how to sing altogether.
- We will not schedule any additional meetings or gatherings of ten people or more through January 4, however existing scheduled groups and faith formation opportunities may continue

using our existing protocols for masking and social distance. Many of these already have a Zoom option, so you may wish to avail yourself of that option. If you are a group leader and wish to cancel, please contact your respective group.

- Even though they were emailed to everyone for whom we had an email in May, our complete COVID-19 policies and procedures can be always found at www.sjohio.org/covid.

I thank you for the attention that has been paid to these items throughout the past several months since our reopening in May. I know all of these can be tiring and we all long for a COVID-free existence, but it will obviously keep existing alongside of us for the foreseeable future. With this in mind, I do want to look forward and discuss our celebration of Christmas. As I mentioned last month, the expected continuation of our capacity limits (a 50% reduction limits the church to 400 people and the HFC to 125 people), there is no way that we can have the “usual” 4pm Christmas Eve Mass with its 1,200+ people. With this in mind, we have added an 8pm Mass on Christmas Eve. Thus, our schedule will be 4pm, 6pm, 8pm, and 11pm on Christmas Eve, while keeping 9am and 11am on Christmas Day. We will live-stream 4pm Mass on Christmas Eve so that it can be available for viewing as it happens or at any other time during your celebration of Christmas. There will be no Children’s Choir nor bells at 4pm Mass, while all Masses will feature a variety of either a cantor, small ensemble of singers, and instruments. Masses will feature Christmas carols and a musical prelude will still take place prior to the start of Christmas Eve’s 11pm Mass. A worship aid will be available online for the live-streamed Mass and the 11pm prelude and Mass.

Our past experience is that nearly 80% of people attend Mass on Christmas Eve, so we hope the additional Mass will allow people to spread out some that evening. In order to prepare adequately for Christmas this year, however, I would like to request your assistance with a survey. As you look at your own plans this year, we would like to get a sense of when you are planning (at this point) to attend Mass in-person. This is not a reservation and if you are not planning to attend in-person, you can ignore this request, but if you are, your assistance in completing this very brief survey will be helpful. Please visit www.sjohio.org/ChristmasSurvey to participate in our interest survey.

Speaking of Christmas, we are on the cusp of Advent as the season of immediate preparation not only for Christmas, but ultimately for welcoming Christ at the end of time. Similar to Lent, it is a great opportunity to take time to grow in our faith. Our parish already offers free subscriptions to FORMED.ORG, which offers a great deal of resources for prayer and growing in our faith. I encourage you to visit our parish website for a link to FORMED.ORG. In addition, the Diocese of Cleveland will be launching a new web page, available through www.dioceseofcleveland.org, which will offer a variety of resources to help us make Advent and Christmas especially meaningful this year. This new webpage will provide educational, formational and liturgical materials for us.

In conclusion, please remember that our Sunday bulletin will always contain the most current information and schedule for liturgies at our parish. Besides getting a copy at Mass, you can find it online at www.sjohio.org/bulletin. I will write again next month. In case you did not read in the bulletin, I ended up tripping and breaking my left foot. Luckily, it is progressing well and I am on the mend! Know that Father Kevin and I, and our entire Parish Staff, continue to keep you in our prayers; please continue to keep us and our entire parish community in yours!

Happy Thanksgiving and have a great start to Advent! St. Joseph, pray for us!
~Fr. Joe