

May 18, 2020

Dear Parishioners:

It is my great pleasure to announce that Sacred Heart intends to resume public services beginning the weekend of May 23-24, keeping to our normal Mass schedule – 5:30PM on Saturday, 8:00AM and 11:00AM on Sunday. This reopening will conform to diocesan and state Phase 1 limitations. As a reminder, the Bishop's dispensation from attending Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation remains in effect. Vulnerable parishioners (65+ years old or those with pre-existing health conditions), or those not yet comfortable attending a public service, are encouraged to remain at home and continue viewing our live-streamed or recorded Masses.

These significant mandates, as applied to our parish operations at this time, include the following:

- Attendance at any Mass will be limited to how many parishioners can be accommodated in church while maintaining 6 ft separation among attendees. This restriction effectively reduces our maximum capacity to 150 per Mass. Parishioners who may arrive after this capacity is reached must be turned away at the door.
- All attendees 3 years old or older must wear a face covering at all times, except at the brief moment when they consume Eucharist. Parishioners who arrive without a face covering must be turned away at the door.
- Entrance to the building must be controlled. Church will only be accessible using the parking lot entrance to the Commons. A screener must be stationed at the entrance to ask basic health and COVID-19 exposure questions before allowing entry.
- Church seating must be arranged to maintain 6 ft separation for non-family members (family members may sit together). Seating areas will be designated for families (3 or more), couples, and single attendees; with seating in these areas specifically marked. Ushers will seat parishioners as they arrive, filling the pews from front to back of the church. Because of the extended time needed to screen and properly seat everyone before Mass starts, parishioners are requested to arrive 30 minutes before the start of Mass.
- Physical distancing must be maintained throughout the Mass. The exterior entrance area and the interior aisles in church will be marked to maintain 6 ft separation while entering church or waiting in line for communion. Holding of hands during the Lord's Prayer and physical greetings during the Sign of Peace are suspended.
- Because it has been demonstrated that singing can spread the coronavirus to greater distances, all singing by the congregation must be suspended. Only one musician and one cantor will be allowed to provide music during the Mass.
- Paper worship aides / song sheets for Mass and paper weekly bulletins will not be distributed.
- Children's Liturgy sessions must be suspended.
- The Nursery will be closed.
- Offertory baskets cannot be passed through the congregation. Clearly marked baskets will be placed at the entrance and exits where parishioners may drop their offerings when arriving or

departing from church. I strongly encourage all parishioners to visit the Sacred Heart online giving portal in order to mitigate any issues related to giving.

- Communion may only be distributed by Fr. Paul and Deacon Rusty. Ushers will bring communicants forward row-by-row, ensuring 6 ft separation is maintained in the line. Communicants (wearing masks) must step forward to receive the Host in the hand. After receiving the consecrated Host, communicants will step to the side (to a marked place), lift their masks to consume the Host, replace their masks and return directly to their seats.
- Exiting after Mass will be done row-by-row by the ushers to ensure physical separation is maintained. Parishioners will be dismissed in their order of arrival (seated front to back of the church). Parishioners must depart the church immediately after the Mass. Gathering or socializing in the building cannot be allowed, either before or after Mass.
- Finally, the occupied areas of the church must be disinfected following each Mass. Parishioners are dissuaded from using the restrooms during their time in the building unless absolutely necessary.

As you can see, the requirements we must meet to reopen for public Mass are extensive. I ask for your cooperation and patience to make this work. To help us comply with the recommended maximum church capacity, please go directly to our online Mass sign-up page at <https://signup.com/go/GeevcDP>, find the Mass you desire to attend and enter the number of attendees in your party each week. You may also go to the parish website at www.sacredheartnorfolk.org and click on the Mass sign-up link to get to this site. Also, as previously mentioned, kindly arrive at least 30 minutes prior to the start of the scheduled Mass so that you can be screened for entry and comfortably seated before Mass begins.

For those who choose not to come to Mass, as permitted by the Bishop, we will continue to live-stream and post recordings of at least one Mass each weekend. Feel free to visit the parish website and check your emails for correspondence and weekly bulletins from Sacred Heart for the latest parish information. I also plan to continue sending parish update emails each Wednesday at 1:00PM, so please look for those as well. If you have any questions, please contact me at: frpaul@sacredheartnorfolk.org or office@sacredheartnorfolk.org.

Finally, know that I have missed our parish community engagement over the last two months, and look forward to seeing you at church again – even if we must wear masks! I continue to pray and offer my Masses for the health and well-being of the parish and your families.

Sincerely,

Fr. Paul Muyimbwa

Pastor