

St. John Baptist de La Salle Pastorate

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MAY 2020

Dear members of the pastorate,

In a press release dated Wednesday May 20th, Archbishop Jackels gave permission for **PUBLIC MASSES** to be celebrated again beginning on the Solemnity of Pentecost, the weekend May 30th/31st. I'm very grateful to hear this news! **I'VE MISSED ALL OF YOU** and I'm eager to see you again whenever you feel you're able to attend Mass. I say that because I imagine that not everyone will immediately come back to Mass, especially vulnerable pastorate members with underlying health conditions and/or those who have celebrated more birthdays. The dispensation from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass remains in effect for those who can't confidently attend Mass for one reason or another. For those who are able to return to Mass, it will be good, but it will also be **A DIFFERENT EXPERIENCE**.

We're unable to resume our experience of Mass that we knew before the COVID-19 pandemic. So as not to have anyone feel like they're caught off-guard about what it means to come back to Mass, this letter is an introduction to some of the **NEW MEASURES** we'll be putting in place when we gather for the worship of God in Holy Mass. Here are a few of the things you'll see and experience when we gather again for Mass. Please note the difference between the things which are identified as **NON-NEGOTIABLE** and the things which are identified as **STRONGLY SUGGESTED**.

In the **NON-NEGOTIABLE** category, when we gather for Mass, we'll practice the following things in the pastorate until further notice:

- **Social Distancing** – we will maintain a six-foot distance between ourselves and anyone else in the same pew with us (as well as people in front of us and behind us).
 - o Families may sit together in close proximity if they're all living in the same house.
 - o People not present with family should maintain six feet of distance from others.
- **Church seating capacity (social distancing)** – in an effort to maintain social distancing, we will monitor the number of people in church, though we never want to turn anyone away.
- **No Sign of Peace** – we will refrain from the Sign of Peace altogether, to the extent that the words, “*Let us offer each other a sign of peace,*” won't be spoken at Mass.
- **No Precious Blood from the chalice** – we will only distribute Holy Communion in the form of the Body of Christ (with no contact), and not the Precious Blood from the chalice.
- **No passing of collection baskets** – each parish will have a designated collection basket where you can place your tithing envelope (or cash donation). It will be identified with a sign.
- **No presentation with the gifts of bread and wine** – the gifts of bread and wine will be kept at the credence table in the sanctuary and will not be brought forward.
- **No sitting in pews that have been marked off** – in order to maintain social distancing, some of the pews will be roped off. Those pews are off-limits. Don't sit in them.
- **Cover your cough, stay home if you're sick** – if you cough while at Mass, please cough into your sleeve/elbow. If you feel under the weather, you shouldn't come to Mass.
- **No formal socializing events after Mass** – we will not have Donut Sundays until further notice, and I will greet people after Mass but at a distance and won't be shaking hands.

- **Distribution of Holy Communion** – we will distribute Holy Communion to one half of the church at a time. I will distribute to one side and then the other, with each pew on a side getting up at a time and maintaining social distance while in line. I'll give verbal instructions at each Mass.
- **Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion** – at this time, I plan to be the only one distributing Holy Communion for the foreseeable future. This will be continually evaluated over time.
- **Lector and Commentator roles** – this will be a combined role in order to minimize the number of people in the sacristy and standing at the ambo. This will be continually evaluated over time. If a lector/commentator wants to wear a face mask (see below), they should NOT wear it while reading.
- **Liturgical music ministry** – no musician should attend Mass if they feel uncomfortable doing so. Hymnals will be removed and instrumental music will be provided IF a musician is present. There will be no signing at the present moment. This will be continually evaluated over time.

In the **STRONGLY SUGGESTED** category, the following may be observed or not observed at Masses in the pastorate (at the discretion of each person):

- **Wearing a Face Mask** – no one is required to wear a face mask while at Mass, especially those for whom wearing one would represent a medical difficulty. We will NOT be providing face masks, so please bring your own if you want to wear one in church. No one should be shamed for wearing one or not wearing one. We're all one family, and we respect each other.
- **Bring your own hand sanitizer** – although hand sanitizer will be available in church, we suggest that you bring your own if you'd like to make sure you have some on hand.
- **Individual bottles of holy water** – holy water containers around church will be kept empty to help curb viral spread, but you're welcome to take a FREE holy water bottle and use personally. They can be re-filled using the large holy water container in church (sanitize hands after filling).
- **Reception of Holy Communion** – while we are not prohibiting reception of Holy Communion on the tongue, we are strongly suggesting that you receive Holy Communion in the hand. Anyone who would like to receive on the tongue should present themselves LAST in the line.
- **Cleaning of restrooms after use** – we don't believe it will be possible to have someone clean the restroom after each individual use. We will have cleaning supplies on hand and we ask those who use the restroom to wipe down surfaces they've touched with a disinfectant spray and paper towel.

There are other things we'll likely do at church to help; such things include 1) open doors and/or windows to assist with air flow, 2) have greeters/ushers present to help assist with seating, 3) have money counters simply put the collection in the deposit bag without preparing a deposit (Connie will then take care of it at the Pastorate Office), and 4) have volunteers help with wiping down the upper portion (backrest) of each pew and commonly touched surfaces like doors and door handles.

DAILY MASS will resume in each church as before the pandemic, but with these same new measures in place (social distancing, optional mask, volunteer cleaning of pews, etc.). The LIVE STREAM daily Mass will be concluded at this time, but I will continue to celebrate a live stream Sunday Mass on Facebook (www.facebook.com/noahjdiehm) for those who don't yet feel able to return to Sunday Mass. Those who would like to receive Holy Communion but not come to a weekend Mass are encouraged to do so at one of the regularly-scheduled daily Masses. We are not yet going to resume the practice of taking Holy Communion to the homebound as a way to protect them from anything we might bring in.

IF YOU HAVE CONCERNS ABOUT ANY OF THE ABOVE, please contact me at the Pastorate Office at (563) 870-4041. Thank you for your patience as we try to responsibly practice our faith in the midst of this COVID-19 pandemic. May God bless you and your family in this new season of life!

Sincerely,
Fr. Noah J. Diehm