

# **St. Jude Church**

## **PHASE 2**



### **Precautions**

## **for Celebrating Mass**

**A Letter from Fr. Trey**

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**FR. TREY'S MESSAGE TO THE PARISH**  
**June 29, 2020**

## ***PHASE 2: The Celebration of Mass at St. Jude***

### **INTRODUCTION:**

Well, we have been in PHASE 2 as a State, and, as we all know, this phase has been extended for another 28 days. This will take us to the end of July, at which time the Governor will give us another update and, I assume, a decision as to what things will look like and be like from that point on. In the meantime, I wanted to update the information that pertains to our parish. While we are allowed to operate at 50% capacity, this makes no real difference for us from operating at 25% capacity. If we operate according to the 6 foot standard, we would not be able to fit a literal ¼ capacity (250 persons) in our church. So, we are asking that you please continue to sign up for a Mass. I am so very grateful to all of you for your understanding and your help with all of this. We just need to stay strong.

### **I want to again list the resources upon which our procedures are based:**

1. The Governor's recent directives
2. Bishop Michael Duca's directives
3. Advice of our Parish Reentry Committee

### **DISPENSATION FROM OBLIGATION:**

When you and I come to church, when we “go to Mass,” we do it because we **WANT TO**, not because **WE ARE REQUIRED TO**. At the same time, “keeping holy the Sabbath” has been a big part of who we are and what we teach as Catholics. The idea of an “obligation to attend Mass on Sundays” is part of our heart's desire, but it is also a part of our Catholic teaching. This is rooted in scripture, and it is a fundamental part of who we are, as we attempt to live holy lives.

However, a bishop has the ability—and the responsibility—to “dispense” us from this obligation whenever he feels that circumstances necessitate it. You may recall this happening during the flood of 2016, when Bishop Muench dispensed everyone from the obligation to attend Mass. Our current bishop, Bishop Michael Duca, has done the same thing in response to the pandemic and the stay-at-home ordinance. **NO ONE IS OBLIGATED TO ATTEND MASS.** To use the bishop's language, **“The Sunday Mass obligation continues to be dispensed for all Catholics indefinitely.”** Simply put, if you, for any reason, do not attend Mass on the weekend, **NO SIN IS COMMITTED.** I cannot put it any more simply than that. This is where I begin my message to you tonight. And why is this important? Because there are those people who, with the best

intentions in the world, will feel an incredible amount of guilt if they do not attend. Not only older but some younger Catholics will struggle with this. This is a struggle of which God, through the bishop, wants to relieve us.

### **THOSE WHO ARE ENCOURAGED TO STAY HOME:**

Now, let's take that one step further. There are people in certain situations who are encouraged to stay home and not attend Mass. While none of us will refuse you entrance or "turn you away at the door," you need to know that the following are being encouraged to stay at home and continue praying with us from there for the time being:

1. Anyone who simply is not comfortable going out in public and being with a large number of people. Whether you are sick or not, have a pre-existing condition or not, and so on—if you are just simply not ready, then you are encouraged to stay home. Your health and that of your family comes first, as it always should.
2. Second—and I am going to use a few medical terms here— those who are especially vulnerable (namely, those defined by the Center for Disease Control as those 60 years of age or older, those with compromised immune systems, and/or those with underlying health conditions), those who are ill or who are not feeling well—are encouraged to stay home.
3. I am also going to mention some specific examples here. These have been given to us by the Office of the Bishop of the Diocese of Baton Rouge, in reference to the Center for Disease Control and in consultation with health care professionals. I apologize for the specificity, but I feel that this one time, it is necessary:
  - a. People with chronic lung disease or moderate to severe asthma
  - b. People who have serious heart conditions
  - c. People who are immunocompromised
  - d. Many conditions can cause a person to be immunocompromised, including cancer treatment, smoking, bone marrow or organ transplantation, immune deficiencies, poorly controlled HIV or AIDS, and prolonged use of corticosteroids and other immune weakening medications
  - e. People with severe obesity (body mass index [BMI] of 40 or higher)
  - f. People with diabetes
  - g. People with chronic kidney disease undergoing dialysis

h. People with liver disease” ([www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov))

These are persons who are particularly vulnerable to contraction of this virus. Again, I apologize for the specificity, but this was communicated with us. I felt the need to share it with you.

#### **WHEN WILL MASS RESUME:**

The celebration of weekend Masses here at St. Jude continues, with the following schedule:

**SATURDAY VIGIL:** 4:00pm

**SUNDAY MASSES:** 8:00am, 9:30am. And 11:00am

#### **WEEKDAY MASS SCHEDULE, EFFECTIVE JULY 1:**

Monday	8:30am
Tuesday	5:30pm
Wednesday	12:00pm
Thursday	8:30am

*We will continue to stream Mass live each Sunday on [our YouTube channel at 9:30am.](#)*

#### **FULFILLMENT OF YOUR SPIRITUAL NEED:**

Now, what this means is, there will be a total of 7 Masses available during the week, each of which will be limited to an occupancy of 250 persons. Again, I know that most of us attend Mass because we want to, as opposed to fulfilling an obligation. However, since there is currently no obligation to attend on Sundays, you may wish to choose another Mass during the week **to fulfill your spiritual need.**

#### **SACRAMENT OF CONFESSION:**

The Sacrament of Confession will continue to be available **by private appointment.** You can either email me or call me to schedule such an appointment. All communication, whether by email or phone call, is private between you and me. The email address to use is: [fathertreynelson@gmail.com](mailto:fathertreynelson@gmail.com). The telephone number to call is 225.766.2431, extension 217.

## SPECIFIC PRECAUTIONS AND RESTRICTIONS:

Let me mention now those specific precautions and restrictions:

1. **No more than 500 persons** can be present at any Mass at any time. This is based on the Governor's stated regulation of 50% occupancy of a building. Since our church seats 1,000 people, that allows for attendance to be 500 at the most. However, again, please see my thoughts on this in the first paragraphs of this document.
2. All those attending must sign up for a Mass in advance of that Sunday. You may do so by way of **SignUpGenius** or by calling the Parish Office. On the homepage of our parish website, you will see a tab labeled, "**SIGN UP FOR MASS.**" For online registration, that would be the place to start.
3. All those attending are asked to **bring and wear your own mask**, except for when receiving communion. If we can obtain masks in advance, we may have some available for those who forget theirs. But please bring and wear your own mask.
4. All those attending are asked to **enter by way of the 2 front side doors of the church**. The main doors will be locked. The 2 side entrances are also handicapped accessible. You may, on the other hand, exit by way of any door.
5. All those attending are asked to sit in **every other pew**. Pews will be closed off.
6. All those attending are asked to sit at least **6 feet apart**, unless you are with your spouse and/or your family.
7. There will be no holy water in the fonts. This will be the case indefinitely.
8. All printed materials, including songbooks and missals, have been removed from church.
9. There will be no printed bulletins available. You can read the weekly bulletin online.
10. There will **only be 2 stations for the distribution of communion**, both of which will be located at the center aisle.
11. **Communion will not be given on the tongue**. Everyone is asked, for the time being, to receive communion on the hand. This is based on advice from my own personal physician and other doctors. Again, communion will not be given on the tongue.
12. The **offertory (collection) basket will not be passed**. Larger baskets will be placed just inside each of the 2 front side entrances of church. **You may drop your offering there, either on the way in or out**. If you will not be attending Mass, you can certainly

continue to give by way of online giving, mailing in, or dropping your offering in the secure lock box at the office. Thank you so much for your giving.

### **SOCIAL DISTANCING AND PHYSICAL CONTACT:**

And now, a word about **social distancing and physical contact**. Visiting and congregating before and after Mass inside or outside of church should not take place. If you do wish to visit after church outside, please practice social distancing.

We are also asking that, when Mass has concluded, you exit the building as swiftly as possible. Why? Because our staff needs time to clean and sanitize the entire church after each and every Mass. I know that this may sound like the opposite of hospitality, but the church must be sanitized in-between Masses.

### **LITURGICAL MINISTERS:**

Regarding those who serve in our various ministries of the liturgy, there some specific restrictions that have been given to us. While I realize that many of you have offered to serve, here are the temporary parameters:

1. Deacon James and I will be the only persons distributing communion.
2. We will not need altar servers at this time.
3. Lectors will be chosen beforehand, by myself and Deacon James. We will not be using Ministry Scheduler Pro at this time.

### **CONCLUSION:**

This brings me to the conclusion of these remarks. I apologize for the length, but we felt it was necessary for me to provide a PHASE 2 update.

In closing, I continue to ask for 2 things of you as we go through this together:

I ask your prayers. You remain in mine daily.

And I ask your patience. No doubt, some people will experience moments of frustration. I realize this. However, I would ask that we all think, breathe, and pray before we speak or email. Let's not allow the frustration to move us in the direction of speaking too loudly or too

quickly. This entire plan is guided by what our bishop has asked of us, and we have also factored in what makes St. Jude Parish unique.

I miss you. I love you. And I can't wait to see you again. Saint Jude the Apostle, pray for us.

Thank you.