

Parish of St. Cecilia

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May 19, 2020

Dear Parishioners of St. Cecilia:

As most of you know, we will be resuming public daily Masses starting on **Monday, May 25, 2020** and public **Sunday Masses on May 30 and 31, 2020**. In order to do this in a safe, healthy and orderly manner, I, utilizing the guidelines of the Archdiocese of Washington, will be asking you to comply to the following procedures, which I would encourage you to review before you attend Mass in an effort to allow our public Masses to run smoothly:

Obligation to Attend Mass: You are still not obligated to attend Mass. The dispensation from the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation issued by the Archdiocese on March 12, 2020, is still in effect until further notice. For your continued participation, Mass will still be livestreamed from St. Peter Claver and St. Cecilia's on Sundays.

Vulnerable Parishioners: Parishioners who are particularly vulnerable (e.g., over the age of sixty, or have existing heart or lung conditions, diabetes, or otherwise immuno-compromised) are strongly encouraged to remain home and should not volunteer to fulfill any liturgical ministries.

Sick Parishioners: Refrain from attending Mass if you or someone in your household is sick (i.e., if you or anyone in your household is running a fever, has a cough or is experiencing any kind of respiratory illness). This is to prevent the spread of any illness to those around you.

Limited Seating: Because of the 6-foot social distancing requirement at Mass, attendance at Mass will likely be restricted in the number of parishioners who can attend at one time. Consequently, seating in the church will be allowed on a first come-first serve basis. Those who will not be able to come inside are asked to sit in their cars and Father will come outside to distribute Communion. Every effort is now being taken to set up a radio station channel on which parishioners can listen to the Mass while sitting in their cars in the church's parking lot. In the meantime, parked parishioners can go on Facebook and attempt to listen to the Mass and wait for Father to come outside to distribute Communion.

Seating Process: Seating is handled by the ushers; they will direct you to an open pew in one of the three sections of seating. Members of the same household may sit together, but there should be at least 6 feet of separation otherwise.

Face Mask: All members of the assembly and all ministers, except the priest-celebrant, must always wear a face covering while in church. Children under the age of two years are not obligated to wear a face mask.

LETTER FROM FATHER SCOTT

Reopening of Public Mass during Covid-19 (May 19, 2020)

Sanitized Hands: All members of the assembly and all ministers are to sanitize their hands upon entering and exiting the church. Hand sanitizer will be provided at the entrances and exits. Parishioners are encouraged to bring their own hand sanitizer to use when needed while they are in the church.

Entrances and Exits: There will be signs designating all entrances and exits. All parishioners, with the exception of those with disabilities, will enter the church using the main entrance. There will be three exits. (i.e., choir, handicap parking, food pantry). Upon entering and departing from Mass, parishioners are asked to maintain a social distance of 6 feet.

Directional Markings: Markings will be on the floors, pews and doors to direct people where to go. Ushers will also be there to help guide and direct members of the congregation.

Bathrooms: Parishioners are asked to minimize the use of restrooms while in the church. If they need to use the restroom, they are asked to sanitize the surfaces that are touched. Sanitation supplies will be provided. Please note that the restroom located in the church will be the only restroom available. The bathroom in the Baby Haven Room will be locked.

Cry Room: The Baby Haven Room will be locked during Mass until further notice. If you have a fussy child and wish to leave for a moment, the exit doors will be open for you to step outside. We understand this is an inconvenience for families with small children, but this is to ensure everyone is safe and maintains 6 feet of social distancing.

Hand Contact: We will no longer be participating in the practice of holding hands during the Lord's Prayer and the Sign of Peace. In fact, all hand contact, hugging or any other intimate types of greetings are prohibited.

Offertory Collection: The offertory collection will be taken after Mass has concluded. Ushers with baskets will be outside collecting envelopes. We do encourage everyone to continue to either mail in their envelopes or make an offertory donation through our online eGiving page, which can be found on our website.

Communion Distribution: Only the "Body of Christ" will be offered during Mass. Distribution of Communion will take longer than usual because of the social distancing requirements, so please be patient. Ushers will be around to help direct the congregation.

- Those in the state of grace may come up to receive holy communion.
- Those who cannot receive communion should not come forward for a blessing; there is a blessing for everyone at the end of Mass.
- Children who cannot receive communion, but who are old enough to remain quietly in their pew as their parents come up for communion should do so for their safety. We understand that sometimes this is difficult to do, so please do not feel forced to leave your child unattended in the pew.

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- Those who can receive communion, please follow these steps in order:
 1. Go up for Communion wearing your mask and remaining six feet from others in the line and from the minister.
 2. Keep your mask on and remain six feet away from the minister while he shows the Host and says, "The Body of Christ."
 3. Keep your mask on, respond "Amen," and then approach the minister.
 4. Keep your mask on, place one hand under the other while keeping your fingers together and receive the Host in your hand.
 5. Step six feet away from the minister.
 6. **Carefully loosen your facial covering (or mask by an ear loop)**, consume the Host, and replace the facial covering.

- Special Note: Although each person retains the right to receive the Host on the tongue, the Centers for Disease Control have recommended against it; but more importantly, out of love for our brothers and sisters and out of kind concern for the vulnerable and our sacred ministers, those who normally receive on the tongue are respectfully asked to consider receiving in the hand as a temporary measure. It is a legitimate practice attested to in our Catholic Tradition since the ancient Church.

Gathering before and after Mass: Gatherings of parishioners before and after Mass inside the church and outside on the parking lot are prohibited for your safety and wellbeing. Because the county still prohibits people from assembling in groups outside of buildings, we ask that you come straight into the church at the start of Mass and you return to your vehicles immediately after Mass. For health reasons, I will not be greeting the parishioners before and after Mass.

I understand that these are a lot of changes; however, at this time, they are all necessary to ensure as best as we can a relatively safe environment. Even with these critical changes, we cannot guarantee that no one will get the virus or any other ailment, and this is why it is necessary for you to decide what is best for you and your family when considering whether or not you should be attending Mass at this time.

Yes, the next few weeks will likely be a little bumpy. Yes, we will likely mess up here and there, but do not fret. As long as we work together as a parish community, we can make this work and provide a safe, healthy and loving environment in which we can again publicly worship and praise the Lord joyfully in Spirit and in Truth.

Please, if you have any questions or concerns, contact the Parish Office at 301-862-4600 or by email at stcecilia@md.metrocast.net.

Your father and brother in Christ,
Fr. Scott Woods