

# Plan for Public Mass Reopening

## St. Joseph Catholic Church, Fort Jennings

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To our parishioners:

On May 8, Bishop Daniel Thomas issued a memo regarding the gradual restoration of public Masses and liturgies, outlining guidance on how parishes in the Diocese are to do this. On May 21, the Parish Council met with Fr. Charles, Deacon Larry, and Tony Recker to develop a plan and best practices for reopening Mass to the public in accordance with these guidelines. **The initial publicly-celebrated Mass will be the Vigil Mass of Pentecost Sunday on Saturday, May 30, 2020 at 5:00 PM.**

This plan was developed in the interest of protecting all involved by maintaining the recommended social distancing and proper sanitation guidelines:

- **The Bishop continues to dispense the obligation to attend Sunday Mass until further notice.** With that in mind, it is strongly encouraged that those who are elderly, immunocompromised, and/or have health conditions that make them more vulnerable to contracting disease continue to watch Mass from home until they feel comfortable attending again. Those who feel ill or show any symptoms of illness, however minor, should continue to stay home as well.
- At this time, there will be **an additional Mass at 8:30 AM** on Sundays. Weekend Masses will thus include 5 PM Saturday and 7:30 AM, 8:30 AM, and 9:30 AM Sunday.
- There will be no Monday weekday Mass at this time. Other weekday Masses will continue.
- During weekday Masses, seating will be restricted to the middle two sections.
- **There will be a single entrance point and exit point for all Masses.** We ask that all **enter Mass through the main entrance** and then **exit Mass through the side doors. Please do not congregate in the Narthex or in any other area – enter the sanctuary immediately upon entering Church.**
- Hand sanitizer will be readily available for use at all entrances and exits.
- The holy water stoups will remain empty.
- Masks will also be available near entrances for those who do not have masks or forget them. Masks are strongly recommended but not mandatory. Children under two are not to wear masks.
- Mass attendance will be restricted to 50% capacity. For our church, this is 304 people. Ushers will thus be ensuring we do not exceed this (though we do not expect this to be an issue).
- Every other pew will be blocked off with cords to ensure proper distancing between people / families. Please keep this in mind when entering church and choosing a seat for you and your family. Please sit at least six feet apart from those who are not within your family.
- There will be extra chairs placed around the perimeter of the sanctuary for overflow seating if needed.
- Extra chairs will also be available stacked in the Narthex should there be no seating available in the sanctuary (though this will be a last resort).
- All hymnals / missalettes, prayer cards, etc. will be removed from the pews.

- There will be no bulletins for the first few weeks or until further notice. All announcements will be communicated verbally during Mass and/or on the Parish Facebook page and website.
- There will be only one server needed per Mass – there will be no carrying of the Cross, candle, and Lectionary book. Servers and Lectors, you will be sent an updated schedule.
- There will be no choir.
- We will continue to omit the Sign of Peace during Mass.
- Please also refrain from holding hands during the Lord’s Prayer (and this particular practice should be permanently discontinued).
- The Precious Blood will not be distributed at this time.
- **Holy Communion will not proceed with a line.** Instead, Fr. Charles, Deacon Larry (if present), and 2-3 Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion will distribute Holy Communion to each section, pew by pew, rather than a communion line. Please remain in your pew and wait for them to come to you for Communion. Eucharistic Ministers will be sent an updated schedule.
- Please do not wear gloves to receive Holy Communion.
- If you feel apprehensive about receiving Holy Communion, you may continue to make a spiritual communion.
- **Collection baskets will no longer be passed around during Offertory. Rather, these baskets will be near the doors. One will be at the entrance, and additional baskets will be at the side doors.**
- Those who are interested are encouraged to sign up for automatic EFT payments in lieu of offertory envelopes. Please look at previous bulletins and contact the Parish Office if interested.
- **To avoid congregating, at the conclusion of Mass, please wait in your pew. Ushers will dismiss attendees pew by pew to exit out the side doors.**
- At the conclusion of each Mass, high-traffic areas and high-touch surfaces will be properly disinfected.
- The main entrance door will remain open prior to each Mass to avoid repeated touching of door handles.

**Please check the Parish Facebook page and website for updates and announcements.** The above practices may be amended as time goes on, so we will keep you updated as we adjust.

We are very grateful and excited to be physically attending Mass again and appreciate your cooperation and patience.

May God continue to bless and protect us!

Fr. Charles Obinwa  
 Deacon Larry Schimmoeller  
 Tony Recker, Maintenance & Hall Manager  
 St. Joseph Parish Council  
     Rodney Ricker, President  
     Matt Dube, Vice President  
     Traci Miller, Secretary