

Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church Reopening

May 21, 2020

Greetings Blessed Sacrament Parish Family,

We are pleased to share the news the Diocese of Savannah has authorized all of our churches to begin holding public worship again. We will follow the diocesan indications, taking special precautions for public safety and health. **However, please know that the obligation to attend Sunday Mass remains dispensed, at least until the end of June.** Those who wish to resume coming to Mass may do so; those who are not yet ready for any reason, may wait longer. *Those who are most at risk of serious infection or illness, as well as their caregivers, are strongly encouraged to stay home and participate in live-streamed or televised Masses.* The risk of the coronavirus is still very real, and even with the best health practices and strict physical distancing in place, anyone attending public events, such as the Mass, is increasing their risk of exposure to COVID-19.

The following safety guidelines and recommendations reflect the most current guidance from civil and public health authorities and are aligned with the State of Georgia. They will be updated as needed to reflect the guidance from our governmental leaders as we pass through different phases of recovery from the pandemic.

As we resume the celebration of public Mass, it is crucial that we approach this next phase with **patient, loving and charitable hearts.** Here are some general guidelines to help us return together to Holy Mass:

Physical distancing will limit seating availability for Mass. Pastors must abide by state and local laws and restrictions that pertain to physical distancing. This physical distancing will determine how many seats can be made available for Mass in the church or other parish buildings, so pastors will define a fair method for determining how many can attend any one Mass and ensuring the greatest potential for participation. Unfortunately, this may mean that by ensuring everyone has at least

some opportunity for attending Mass, **no one should expect to be able to attend Mass every Sunday or with guaranteed regularity.** *It is very important that you are registered with the parish to receive updated information regarding Mass times and safety measures.* Please make sure your contact information is current so that you can receive updates through email, Facebook or the parish website.

- For the safety of the parish community, it is important that those who are symptomatic, **feel sick**, have a fever, have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, or have travelled internationally or to a domestic hot spot in the past two weeks, stay home. Because of the general dispensation, there is no obligation at this time to attend Mass, so there is no sin if you stay home for any reason.
- The wearing of **masks** for ages three and up is highly recommended. We do this to protect others as well as ourselves.
- We do not have a large supply of **hand sanitizer**. We strongly encourage each family or individual to bring their own supply.
- Use of the restrooms will be limited to one person at a time, not including children. Please maintain a 6-foot distance from people waiting in line.
- We strongly encourage all parishioners to maintain proper physical distancing on church property (on the steps, on the sidewalks, in the parking lot, etc.) Before and after Mass, even though we have been isolated for a long time, please do not congregate *in the church* for conversations.

We have put hymnals away for sanitary purposes. We encourage you to bring worship resources if you choose. You may also follow the mass readings on your phone at www.usccb.org/bible - the click "Today's Readings."

Our diocesan standard is to admit no more than 25% of our capacity to allow for proper social spacing. Our capacity is 400 which means that we can accommodate 100 persons per mass.

LIMITING THE SIZE OF THE CONGREGATION AND PHYSICAL DISTANCING

- Please note that only certain doors will be unlocked and open for church entry. The unlocked doors will be: 1. Main front doors facing Waters Ave. 2. The two side doors closest to the altar (one on 44th Street and one to the parking lot). Once mass begins, only the front doors will be accessible.
- We will *try* to have ushers **open the doors** as you arrive so that multiple people are not touching the door handles.
- There will be no **Holy Water** in the fonts, but you are encouraged to make the sign of cross as you enter to recall your baptism, and to acknowledge that you are in the presence of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist.
- Please follow the **ushers' directions** in regard to seating.
- Once allowable seating is filled, we will not be able to admit any more persons.
- Since the obligation is lifted for attending Sunday mass you may wish to consider daily mass where seating will be more available. Thus, you may wish to watch the Sunday livestream of the mass, and also attend mass on a weekday.
- Members of a single household do not need to practice social distancing with each other so they may sit together in the same row.
- If a group arrived in a single private vehicle, they could also sit together.
- While these groups may sit together, spacing between units and others is still 6 feet.
- Due to social spacing, the cry room is closed. The nursery will remain closed until further notice. Children's church has concluded for this year, and will hopefully, resume in the Fall.
- Please reserve the end of pews for parents with small children so they may get up and walk if the child is agitated.
- We will not have **altar servers** during this period.
- We will use volunteer **lectors**. Volunteers please sign up as normal.
- We will not use Eucharistic ministers until further notice.
- We will use **cantors** only. The **choir** will not resume until it is deemed safe to do so.
- The pews and other common surfaces in the church will be cleaned and sanitized between Masses. *We need volunteers to help with this process.*

OFFERTORY AND COLLECTION

- **Baskets** will be placed by the entrances where you may place your offering as you enter the church. We encourage you to consider enrolling in our **on-line giving program** at: <https://www.osvhub.com/mbschurch/funds> or to mail in your contribution to our office.
- The offertory procession (bringing up the gifts) will be omitted. The gifts will be placed on the credence table in the sanctuary.
- We will forego the **sign of Peace**.

HOLY COMMUNION

- The Precious Blood will not be distributed.
- In the communion line, please maintain six feet of distance from the person in front of you, if they are not part of your household. We will have spacing markers taped for your convenience.
- If you are receiving Holy Communion, please wear your mask in line. Immediately before Communion, lower your mask to communicate. Please wear the mask on the way back to your seat.
- Receiving Holy Communion in the hand is preferable, although receiving Holy Communion on the tongue will not be denied.
- If you wear gloves, you must remove them for Holy Communion. If the priest believes he touched the hands or mouth of a recipient, he will pause and use hand sanitizer before continuing.

Mass Times beginning Monday, May 25th, 2020

- Saturday 8:00 a.m.
- Saturday 5:30 p.m.
- Sunday 8:00 and 10:30 a.m.
- Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m.
- Wednesday evening 5:30 p.m.

Confessions: Wednesday at 4:00 p.m. and Saturday at 4:00 p.m.

(Fr. Brannen is happy to hear your confession usually just before or after daily mass.)

We will continue to **livestream daily mass, Sat. 5:30 pm vigil and Sunday morning 8:00 a.m.**

Please note that there will be ten masses per week from which to choose. Everyone will not be able to attend Sunday mass at this time.

PARISH OFFICE

Our parish office will re-open on Tuesday, May 26. You may continue to reach us through email and phone. If you visit the office, please wear a mask and use physical distancing when conversing with the staff.

Let us be careful about making assumptions about other people's comfort levels – even if they are friends or long-time “pew mates.” We do not always know the anxiety or fear that another may have, or perhaps even a health concern. We should all strive to follow the recommended protocols and ask permission if we wish to break with them.

Please note that as new data about the Covid-19 becomes available, these best practices may change. We will keep the BSC Website up to date with the latest best practices (www.mbschurch.org). That being said, there is also no way that BSC ministers, staff, or volunteers can reasonably enforce all protocols. We all need to be responsible adults, being especially attentive to children, who may not understand the changes that we must make. If at any time you feel uncomfortable because of someone else, please consider **charitably and calmly** getting up and moving.

Regarding First Communion and Confirmation masses, please note that if due to previous commitments or health concerns, a person cannot attend these masses to receive a Sacrament, we will make other arrangements for them over the summer. We are trying to remain flexible in the midst of changing circumstances.

ADORATION CHAPEL

The adoration chapel will open on Monday, May 25th for prayer. Only two people may be in the chapel at one time, and those who are registered and committed adorers will have priority for their designated hour. Adorers are encouraged to wear masks and to wipe down the prie dieu and pew after their hour with the disinfectant provided.

If a person wishes to pray before the Blessed Sacrament and the chapel is full, please go into the Church to pray between the hours of 7:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. daily, observing the social distancing guidelines already mentioned.

ROSARY: The daily live streamed rosary at 12 noon will be discontinued as of Monday, May 25th, since the Adoration Chapel will be opened. A previously recorded version of the Adoration Rosary is available on the parish website should you wish to participate in a rosary prayer service (www.mbschurch.org/rosary).

As has been the case throughout this entire time of pandemic, we will regularly review all policies and provisions and determine if any changes are needed. We will promptly communicate such changes with you. We know that not all of you will feel comfortable coming to Mass just yet – or you may prudently need to stay away for another reason.

Be at peace, and know that we are praying for you and for your family. Please pray for us – and let us know if there is any way that we can be of service. “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever” (Hebrews 13:8).

Sincerely, Yours in Christ,

Fr. Brett Brannen
Pastor