

June 4, 2020

Dear Friends in Christ,

I trust you saw and hopefully read my communication to you from May 28th, announcing the limited re-open of Mass. As mentioned, we plan to start this Sunday, June 7th, with two Masses: 10:00am and 12:00pm. We will live-stream a non-public Mass on Saturday at 5:30pm, that can be viewed either live or at anytime afterward.

Again, this is only a step towards resumption of normal Mass. The maximum number of attendees is capped at 100 and it will be outside. I remind you that here in King County, we are in Phase 1. When we get to Phase 2 (timing is uncertain at this point) we are told we will be able to have Mass indoors, with a maximum number of 50 attendees. To get some additional background and basic details, I encourage you to watch this short video from Archbishop Etienne: <https://vimeo.com/424172593>

HOW TO REGISTER

To attend Mass, we're required to have you register online. You'll see a link to it on the main page of our parish website (sjcissaquah.org/register-for-mass).

I honestly have no idea what Mass attendance will be like. But one intent is to allow as many people who want to come to Sunday Mass to be able to, even if we can't all attend this first week. I trust that over the course of a month, everyone who wants to attend, can attend at least one Sunday.

For those who are unable to use the online registration, please either ask someone to register for you or simply call our parish office and we'll help (425)392-5516.

Registration for Sunday Mass will be cutoff on Saturday at 2:00pm. For future weekends, the cutoff will be noon on Friday.



PARKING

Our plan is to celebrate the Mass in the upper parking lot, using the main entrance area as our sanctuary. With that in mind, the majority of the parking will be in the lower lots, using only the lower driveway access. In other words, you'll be entering the parking lot by what usually is used as our exit! We'll have an attendant there to ensure smooth flow of traffic.

NOTE: For those with limited mobility (use of walkers, etc.) please use the regular upper entrance. We will have about 8 spots in available for you in the upper lot.

MASKS & SOCIAL DISTANCING

We are obliged to have you wear a mask. We only have a short supply on hand, so please bring one with you. Along with that, it's been impressed upon us, again and again, how imperative it is that we maintain social distancing.

ARRIVAL/CHECK-IN

As you approach the area reserved for the Mass, our trained staff and volunteers will be there to greet you, check you in and direct you to a place of seating. Please arrive 15-20 minutes before mass so that we can get everyone through this step. Speaking of seating: We ask that you please bring your own chair (i.e. folding chair) – please do not bring blankets to sit on the ground). For those who are unable to bring their own chair, we will have some metal folding chairs available. As stated in my last communication, we don't have 100 chairs and any chairs of ours that are used are required to be disinfected after each use. Bringing you own will reduce the work-load on our volunteers.



ATTENDING MASS?

As Archbishop Etienne makes clear in his video, we are still dispensed from Sunday Mass, so if you are fearful of infection, please follow your instinct. In the broad pool of our community, there are going to be those who are thrilled just to be at Mass, regardless of how different it looks and feels. But also, there are going to be others who are perhaps put-off for various reasons.

But I would ask you: *What is at the heart of why you go to Mass? Is it music? Is it the people? The donuts? Guilt?* You might say yes to any of those things, but even more, you might also say that it's just to be part of Jesus' prayer to the Father—that is, the Mass—to receive his life and the grace of the Eucharist. Yes, even in the humble setting that will be ours, the God who created the universe, who decorated the sky with celestial bodies, who established the rhythmic nature of the waves that kiss the shore, who did so much more.....*that* God will be at work in our humble prayer and coming to us in a *Pearl of Great Price*.

But even more, the Communion of Saints will be with us. Heaven and earth will come together, in the parking lot of St. Joseph Catholic Church. In my communication from March 12th, when we first were facing the dumfounding reality of having no public Masses, I mentioned an amazing video that truly reveals what is going on, hidden from our

earthly senses, every time we celebrate Mass—yes, even when we're sitting on lawn chairs on an asphalt parking lot. If you haven't done so, take a quick look at it:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OOLZDaTgIaM&t=325s>

SCHEDULES

Finally, I ask you to please be flexible as we figure out a schedule that works. We're going to feel our way through it, so it might mean we tweak the number of Masses and their scheduled times. As a general principle, a parish community has just one Mass. If there are more people than can fit at that Mass, then another is added. If more than can fit in two, then a third, and so on.... We'll see how it goes.

With this, there will undoubtedly be some shift in the 'Church Open' schedule, as well as our 'Drive-Thru Confessions' schedule. Please stay tuned. By the way, the meteorologists aren't painting a rosy picture for Sunday. *Yikes!*

Yours in Christ,

Fr. Peter O. Strong