

It is with great joy that I share with you that indoor Masses at St. Mary, Bethel will resume beginning the weekend of the Solemnity of the **Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ** (June 14th). Funeral Masses and Nuptial Masses may also resume inside of a parish church as of the weekend of June 13-14th. Mass will continue to be live-streamed. ***Please be advised that the obligation for Mass is still lifted during this time.*** Please review the following. As you can see, extensive planning and preparation has been done to reopen.

Plan for Resumption of Indoor Mass

- Mass times during this initial phase will be **8:00am and 11:00am on Sunday**.
 - ◇ **By July** the hope is to add the Saturday Vigil Mass at 4:30pm back into the schedule. This depends on how well the initial phase progresses.
 - ◇ **By the Fall** it is hoped that additional Masses will be able to be added until we reach our usual schedule.
- The capacity for each Mass is **100 people**.
 - ◇ There will be an online sign-up procedure for all wishing to attend Sunday Mass. The sign-up will be on a **first-come-first-serve-basis**. Information on this will be dispersed shortly on the parish website.
 - ◇ Senior citizens who do not make use of a computer or internet device are asked to call the parish office on the Wednesday prior to Sunday Mass between 10am-2pm to secure a spot. This sign-up will also be on a **first-come-first-serve-basis**.
- The doors of the Church will open **30 minutes** prior to the Mass time for checking-in purposes.
- **All hymnals and missalettes** are to be removed from the pews and stored for the duration of the pandemic. No other materials may be left in pews.
 - ◇ Printed worship aids should not be distributed.
 - ◇ No material will be on display in the narthex or vestibule of the church. This includes all racks of materials printed texts, etc.
 - ◇ Sunday bulletins will be made available on the website but will not be printed at this time.
- **Holy water fonts** are to remain empty until further notice.
- **Pews** will be marked with physical distancing indicators.
- **Signs** will be posted near all entry and exit areas clearly explaining that masks and social distancing are required. Also, a reminder should be posted that anyone who is not feeling well or has recently been exposed to someone who is COVID-19 positive should not enter the building.
- **Collection baskets** will be placed at the doors of the Church proper. It should be made clear to parishioners when donations should be made. The collection basket will be available either as people enter or exit the church. Passing of collection baskets is not allowed. Online giving should continue to be encouraged. The basket will be monitored by a dedicated volunteer while it is available for use.
- **A small table** will be placed where the Communion minister will distribute Holy Communion. The table should be large enough to accommodate a corporal, purificator, ciborium, and hand sanitizer.
- **Markings** (such as painter's tape), should be placed 6 feet apart on the floor approaching this table, indicating physical distancing of communicants in the Communion line.
- The **Dismissal** will be conducted as follows.
 - ◇ A volunteer will dismiss the congregation by pew, beginning in the rear of the church and ending at the front of the church.
- The church, including restrooms, will be cleaned by professionals experienced with disinfecting spaces for the coronavirus prior to the celebration of the first Mass indoors.
- **Protective Equipment** (gloves, face mask, and face shield) will be used by all volunteers and all high touch areas in the church including restrooms will be cleaned with sanitizing wipes or spray. High touch areas including doorknobs, door handles, door bars, light switches, faucets, sinks, microphones, toilets, pews, the ambo, will also be cleaned regularly.

- **Disinfectants** approved by the EPA that kill the virus that causes COVID-19 must be used when cleaning the church.
- **Altar servers** are not permitted to serve in this phase.

Restrooms

- Restrooms should be used for ***emergency purposes only***.
- Only one person at a time may occupy the restroom. At the entrance of the restroom, if feasible, the floor will be marked in 6-foot intervals, beginning 6 feet from the door. Sanitizing wipes and a small garbage basket in each stall.
- A sign will be posted on the door and in each restroom indicating the following:
 - a) Only one occupant in the restroom at a time.
 - b) When waiting, stand at least 6 feet apart (as indicated by floor markings).
 - c) Clean toilet seat with sanitizing wipes before and after each use.
 - d) Please dispose of these wipes in the trash. Do not flush them.
- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds prior to leaving restroom.
- Hand sanitizer is to be made available at all entrances and exits throughout the church, in the narthex, in restrooms, near the ambo and altar, and on the table(s) prepared for the distribution of Holy Communion.

Facemasks and other protection

- **Parish staff and volunteers** must wear face masks at all times.
 - ◇ They may remove their face masks only when receiving Holy Communion per the guidelines for Holy Communion.
 - ◇ Parish staff and volunteers must wear disposable gloves. If gloves are not available, then frequent sanitization of hands is required.
- **All members of the congregation** need to wear masks, from the time they leave their cars in the parking lot until the time they return to their cars, with a few exceptions:
 - ◇ Children under the age of two should not wear masks.
 - ◇ Parents should judge for children between the ages of two and five whether they should wear a mask.
 - ◇ All people who claim an exemption for a legitimate health reason (one that does not pose a risk to others) can forego wearing a mask.
 - ◇ The faithful may remove their face masks only when receiving Holy Communion per the guidelines for Holy Communion.
 - ◇ Priests may choose not to wear a face mask during the celebration of the Mass if he is the only person present in the sanctuary.
 - ◇ If others are present in the sanctuary, then the priest must wear a face mask.
- If the priest is celebrating the Mass alone without a face mask, he must wear a face mask for the distribution of Holy Communion.
- Deacons must wear face masks during the celebration of Mass.
- All other liturgical ministers in the sanctuary must wear face masks.

Social Distancing and Church Capacity

- **Strict social distancing of at least 6 feet** must be maintained at all times with anyone outside of a person's immediate household. Social distancing must be maintained from the time a person or family leave their car until the time they return.
- State restrictions limit capacity up to 100 people in church. This limit includes all those who are present for the Mass: clergy, liturgical ministers, staff/volunteers, and lay people. Not all churches will be able to have up to 100 people when social distancing requirements are taken into account. Therefore, the number of people

present in the church will depend on the churches approved capacity. This number may change based on the governor's guidance.

- At least one staff member or volunteer must be present while the church is in use to enforce compliance with these instructions and hygiene protocols.

General Guidelines

- Entrance and exit doors are to be propped or held open at the beginning and end of Mass to prevent people from touching door handles, knobs, or push plates.
- If weather permits, church windows should be left open to improve air circulation.
- Staff, ushers, or other volunteers should assist with directing people to marked pews.
- It is recommended that only an accompanist fulfill music ministry during this phase. Based on scientific research and the opinion of the National Association of Teachers of Singing (NATS), the American Choral Directors Association (ACDA), Chorus America, the Performing Arts Medical Association (PAMA), and the Catholic Medical Association congregational **singing by the assembly is suspended until further notice**. Because singing expels significantly more aerosolized particles of virus than speaking, it creates a much greater risk of spreading the virus. In particular, choirs should not rehearse or sing until further notice.
- Processions through the center aisle are prohibited until further notice. The celebrant should enter and exit via the sacristy. If the sacristy is not located near the sanctuary, then the celebrant should enter from an area near the sanctuary and remain in the sanctuary until it is safe to return to the sacristy. People should not be greeted either before or after Mass.
- The Children's Room (Cry Room) and Parish Hall will be secured and unavailable for use.

Specific Liturgical Guidelines

- The Responsorial Psalm and all parts of the Mass must be recited. A cantor may sing at the Procession (as the celebrant processes from the sacristy or near the sanctuary), Preparation of the Gifts, Communion, Communion Meditation, and Recessional (as the celebrant returns to the sacristy or remains in the sanctuary).
- The priest or deacon will proclaim all readings.
- Sanitizing wipes or hand sanitizer will be placed near the ambo.
- The Processions of Gifts are suspended until further notice.
- During the Preparation of the Altar and of the Gifts, the ciborium(a) for the faithful should be placed on a corporal away from the celebrant's paten and covered with lids, or purificators if no lids are available. Chalice's for concelebrating priest(s) and for the deacon(s) should be covered with palls until the reception of Communion.
- The faithful do not hold hands during the Lord's Prayer.
- The physical sign of peace is omitted.
- Distribution of Holy Communion from the chalice is prohibited to the faithful during this phase.

Distribution of Holy Communion Guidelines

- Please refer to the following regarding the protocols for the distribution of Holy Communion.

These norms are designed to allow for the distribution of Holy Communion at Mass in any venue in a safe manner for both ministers and communicants.

- For the duration of the pandemic, we are asking that the faithful receive Communion in the hand only.

General Norms for those receiving Holy Communion on the hand

- **Social distancing** rules must be observed during the procession to and from a communicant's seat.
- All who attend Mass will be required to wear a face mask that has loops that extend over the ears, allowing one side to be loosened without the need for a complete removal of the mask.
- The minister must make every effort to **avoid touching the hand of the communicant** (see below).
- In order to minimize the possibility of contact with droplets between the communicant and minister, each

communicant will come forward and while retaining his or her face mask and standing in front of the minister, receive the consecrated Host from the minister.

- ◇ While the communicant retains his or her mask, the minister will say “Body of Christ” and the communicant will respond “Amen”.
- ◇ The communicant will step aside, remove one side of their mask, consume the consecrated Host and return to their seat.
- ◇ While retaining a face mask, each communicant will be asked to stop six feet in front of the minister before coming forward to receive the Eucharist.
- **Social distancing rules must be observed** during the procession to and from a communicant’s seat and at the altar rail (if applicable)
- Kneelers are permitted.

Requirements for Ministers distributing Holy Communion

Distribution of Holy Communion in the hand:

Before Communion begins:

- Each minister must **sanitize his hands**.
- Although there is little medical evidence that wearing gloves provides any additional protection from infection, **the use of gloves is permitted by the minister but not the person receiving communion**
- If a glove is used, it must be removed correctly after the distribution of Holy Communion (i.e., a glove should be removed inside out) and placed in a designated container for proper disposal (i.e., burning).
- Extra care must be taken **not to touch the communicant’s hand**.

During the distribution of Communion:

- If the minister makes contact with the hand of the communicant, the minister will be required to sanitize his or her hand thoroughly.
 - ◇ For such sanitization to be possible, a table with hand sanitizer or a bowl with a solution of 70% alcohol and a towel should be placed in proximity to the minister who is distributing Communion.
 - ◇ If alcohol is used, it must be poured down the sacrarium after the conclusion of Mass.

After the distribution of Communion:

- Each minister is required to thoroughly sanitize his or her hands.
- If gloves were used, the gloves must be removed in the proper manner, then the minister must disinfect his or her hands.
 - ◇ The gloves should be burned after Mass.
- All vessels and face shields must be purified and sanitized.

Procedures After Each Mass

- The church must be sanitized after each Mass. Please refer CDC guidelines for cleaning and disinfecting your facility by clicking on the following link: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html>
- Parish Staff / Volunteers who are cleaning the church must wear gloves, face mask, and face shields (if available).
 - ◇ High touch areas on Pews, in restrooms, and all other public areas must be sanitized with CDC approved cleaners.
 - ◇ High touch areas on the ambo and microphones must be sanitized.
 - ◇ A log must be kept that records the date, time, name of people cleaning, and cleaned for each cleaning.

- Chalice(s) and ciborium(a) must be cleaned with soap and water or UV light.
- If gloves were used for the distribution of Holy Communion, they must be deposited in a plastic bag. The gloves must be burned as soon as it is feasible.

Additional Guidelines

- The parish must have a detailed response plan for communicating with parishioners, the diocese, and public health authorities in the event that someone who attended Mass is diagnosed as COVID-19 positive.
- Per CDC guidelines, notify local health officials if a person diagnosed with COVID-19 was at Mass. After notifying local health officials and the Office of the Vicar General, notify staff, volunteers, and congregants who attended that particular Mass that they have potentially been exposed to coronavirus. It is critical to maintain confidentiality as required by the American with Disabilities ACT or other applicable laws in accordance with religious practices. The name of the person who is COVID-19 positive must not be disclosed.
- Advise those who were exposed to stay at home and self-monitor for symptoms. If symptoms develop, they should immediately call their doctor.
- Notify the person who has tested positive for COVID-19 that they are not to return to the facility until they have met CDC's criteria to discontinue home isolation which can be found by clicking at the following link: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/when-its-safe.html>.

Disclaimer

As I said earlier, the system for signing up for Masses will be shared on our website at stmarybethel.org. When signing up for the Mass you would like to attend, whether online or via phone, you must acknowledge the following disclaimer:

St. Mary Parish Bethel CT has taken appropriate precautions in light of the CDC and Governor Lamont's recommendations regarding public gatherings in light of the possible transmission of the coronavirus. However, despite these precautions, it is possible that transmission of the virus is still possible due to the public nature of the service and the unknowns with how the virus may be transmitted. By registering for this service, participating in the Mass, and opting to receive Holy Communion, you acknowledge and understand that you are assuming a risk of transmission and will release St. Mary Parish or any clergy involved in the service from any responsibility should you contract the virus in the future.

By signing up to attend the parish service, you recognize the obligation to (i) wear a mask or face covering when required; (ii) adhere to all required direction regarding social distance spacing when participating in the service and (iii) not attend service if you are sick, experiencing any symptoms consistent with the coronavirus, or are otherwise required to be quarantined.

I look forward to welcoming you all back to the Celebration of the Eucharist! I ask for your patience and cooperation as we transition into our new normal. I also ask for your kindness and respect to all those who are volunteering their time and energy in facilitating our opening so we can all celebrate together again!