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May 13, 2020

Dear Parishioners of St. Stephen:

We have received permission to reopen this weekend. We will return to our regular weekend Mass times, with an additional 2:00pm English Mass on Sunday (with no music). We are grateful to the Lord God during this Easter Season, for hearing our prayers to allow us to gather together again in worship and to receive Jesus, the Bread of Life!

The obligation to attend Holy Mass remains suspended until further notice. If you are in vulnerable category, or you are uncomfortable being in public, it is not a sin if you choose not to physically attend Mass. Remember, if you do not feel well, or have been exposed to someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, out of concern for the common good of others, you must not attend.

For those attending Mass:

- 1) Make sure you have a mask when you attend Mass. According to the Bishop's directives, all participants 10 years and older must wear masks or other covering of their nose and mouth. We do not have masks to provide for you. If you don't have a mask, you will not be allowed to enter.
- 2) You are encouraged to bring a small size bottle of hand sanitizer with you for your personal use.
- 3) The doors to the church will open about 60 minutes before Mass. As much as possible, doors will then be propped open to limit contact with door handles.
- 4) Sanitizing stations will be at the entrances. Gloves are not required.
- 5) Seating in the church will require 6-foot distancing between families or individuals.
- 6) Participants may enter the church from the main doors or via the back hallways past the restrooms.
- 7) The number of people admitted to Mass will conform to restrictions placed by the civil authorities. Initial limits will be 25% of maximum capacity. Upon reaching capacity, ushers will redirect people to the Family Life Center (equipped with live-feed video for some Masses) or the Chapel.

8) When these spaces are full, parishioners will be encouraged to remain in their vehicle use their own devices to watch the prerecorded Mass. A minister of Communion will be available for the overflow crowds.

9) For reasons of physical distancing, cantors will still lead our singing, but choirs are suspended until further notice. In lieu of the hymnals, we will need volunteers to operate the overhead projectors. Please call the office if you are interested in volunteering for this ministry.

10) No Children's Offertory or Offertory Procession. Baskets with long poles will be used by ushers and stationary collection baskets will be located in the Chapel. However, we encourage you to use the online giving at: <https://ststephenbentonville.weshareonline.org/>

11) The Sign of Peace will be omitted, as well as the holding of hands.

12) Distribution of Communion will be a different process for priests/ Communion ministers, in order to maintain physical distancing. Individual Communicants will be challenged to maintain spatial distancing in the Communion line from each other and the adjacent pews. When it's time to receive Holy Communion, an announcement will be made, and the ushers will give specific directions in how to proceed. Two sections at a time will proceed up to Communion in order to reduce crossed traffic patterns. Communion may take longer, so please be patient. Communicants should lower their mask briefly, extend their ungloved hands, one on top of the other, receive the host, place the host in their mouth and then raise their mask before returning to their place. Communion cannot be distributed with gloves, nor be received by a member of the faithful if they are wearing gloves.

13) The Bishop has directed that Communion on the tongue cannot be distributed during Mass. No Precious Blood will be administered.

14) Please, do not come forward in line for a blessing [in lieu of Communion]. All of us are blessed together at the end of Mass.

15) Upon conclusion of the Mass, you are welcomed to stay and offer prayers of Thanksgiving. Dismissal will occur by section, with the help of the ushers. Remember to maintain distancing while leaving in order to reduce congestion at the doorways.

16) Please do not leave any items behind in the pew or in the parking lot. Items left in the church will be disposed of during the sanitation process.

17) There can be no congregating after Mass in the narthex or the parking lot without maintaining 6' distancing between individuals or families.

18) All non-essential gatherings are still suspended, including the nursery, coffee & donuts and any other post-Mass social gatherings.

We thank you for your cooperation and support of our efforts. Please be patient as we continue to review and modify our implementations of these requirements. As we work together, let us ask the Lord to bless us with graces for all our physical and spiritual needs during this transitional period.

In Christ,

Your St. Stephen Parish Staff