

Saint Luke the Evangelist

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June 3, 2020

Dear Parishioners and Friends of Saint Luke Parish:

After more than two months of being apart, the State of NH has allowed churches to re-open and the Bishop of Manchester has announced that public Masses can resume on the weekend of June 6-7, and no later than June 13-14. As we come together with gratitude, let us remember that our supreme concern as the Body of Christ must be the common good of all our members. This will require a level of sacrifice from each of us, which we undertake out of charity for each other.

Please read this letter carefully and even consider printing it out so that you have a better idea of what to expect as we resume our liturgical schedule at Saint Luke Parish

WHO SHOULD COME? The obligation to attend Sunday Liturgy remains suspended in the Diocese of Manchester for the foreseeable future. **Those considered at high risk for COVID-19 illness (or those who live with high-risk persons) should continue to stay home, including those over age 65 and anyone with underlying health conditions.** Anyone who feels anxious about returning to Mass should feel comfortable staying at home. We look forward to that happy day when our entire parish family will be able to gather.

Anyone who over the last 14 days has shown symptoms consistent with COVID-19 or has had a positive test for the virus should not attend Mass, nor should anyone in that person's household. The *Centers for Disease Control* (CDC) currently specifies these symptoms as including: cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, fever, chills, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, sore throat, headache, and new loss of smell or taste.

Anyone who is even mildly ill should not attend Mass.

AT MASS The State of NH has allowed churches to re-open at 40% of their seating capacity. Since we have large churches that rarely approach capacity, we should have no problems welcoming all at the regularly scheduled Saturday and Sunday Masses. However, please expect that pews will be closed off for access.

All will be asked to enter through the main center doors of the churches, but you may exit the buildings using any of the doors.

You will find hand sanitizer at the entrance. Please sanitize your hands upon entering the church. We also encourage you to bring your own hand sanitizer to use before receiving Communion.

Even though there is no holy water at the church entrance, you are encouraged to make the Sign of the Cross on yourself as you enter the church space as a reminder of our baptism.

Masks are required for all entering the church and are to be removed only at the reception of Holy Communion and replaced immediately after reception. Masks should not be worn by children under the age of 2; for children between 2-5, a mask is at the discretion of a parent or guardian; masks will be worn by the priest at the time of communion distribution.

The weekly **Bulletin** will be available to you as you enter the church. A special insert will feature the Mass acclamations and readings for Mass that day. Please be sure to take the Bulletin with you as you leave the church. All missalettes and cards have been removed from the pew holders for the time being.

Any congregational singing should always be done wearing your mask. If you do not have a mask, please do not sing at any time.

Seating will respect social distancing. Only those in the same household should sit together. Some pews will be marked to remain empty. **Be mindful of social distancing yourself at all times:** before, during, and after Mass. Please remain at least 6 feet from anyone not in your household whenever possible.

Our financial offering, as a way of supporting the Parish during the preparation of gifts, joins the bread and wine as a symbol of returning the work of our hands to God, who has given us everything and consecrates our offerings. **The collections will be taken up as usual**, but Parishioners at Newton will note the use of the longer handled baskets because the State of NH has forbidden the use of any article that is “passed” from one person to another. This is a great time to consider electronic tithing (EFT) or online giving. More information about online giving is available in the Bulletin, on our website or by contacting the Parish office.

Although it is not formally part of the Catholic liturgy to hold hands during the praying of the **Lord’s Prayer**, it is an informal custom that many people have adopted for themselves. At this time, it should not be done at all by anyone.

The Sign of Peace will be omitted at Mass.

Distribution of Communion will take place from the center aisle. Ushers will help direct Parishioners out of their pews into a single line (with respect to social distancing of 6 ft between persons.)

Communion will be dispensed on the hand only. Gloves of any kind are not to be worn to receive Holy Communion.

Please return to your seats via the side aisles.

At the end of Mass, you are welcome to exit from any door – but please be sure to respect social distancing, and refrain from gathering in the narthex or entry ways of the church. The Pastor will be out front to wish you a good week, but again, please respect social distancing at all times.

OTHER CHANGES You will note a lack of processions at the beginning, at the Preparation Rites and at the end of Mass. No Altar Servers are allowed at this time, and the Pastor has decided that only he will distribute communion at this time.

HELP WANTED Finally, we are looking for a few people to help us “wipe down” seats and surfaces after the 4 PM Mass in particular. Volunteers will be given gloves and disinfectant to wipe down pews, kneelers and other high contact surfaces. If enough people are available, the work should go quickly. See the Pastor for more information.

WELCOME BACK!