

1 July 2020

Dear Esteemed Parishioners,

"I rejoiced when I heard them say, 'Let us go to the house of the Lord!'" These words of the Psalmist likely reflect the sentiments of many who have been yearning to return to public worship. I am pleased to inform you that, as a result of the virtual dialogue with Parish Council on Tuesday evening, the decision has been made for Saint Stanislaus and Holy Trinity to resume public Masses on July 19th. There were several considerations that influenced our decision that I would like to appraise you on so that everyone is duly informed about the public nature of our celebrations.

First and foremost, it can not be stressed enough that those who fall into the "vulnerable" demographic **should not** avail themselves to Sunday liturgy. The Bishop's dispensation from our Sunday obligation remains in effect and will likely be in place indefinitely. Over a month ago, I wrote in my Facebook blog that not attending Sunday Mass during the pandemic is **not a sin** but, rather, "the greater sin lies in those who come to Mass but shouldn't: the sin of capriciousness, imprudence, selfishness, inconsideration, or vainglory." Again, this really can't be emphasized enough and this *is the single most important factor* as we move into the public celebration of the Sacraments.

Secondly, the capacity for seating at both locations is limited by social distancing and the directives of the Bishop. In this regard, I speak in terms of "units." An individual counts as one unit; a household consisting of several people also counts as one unit since social distancing does not apply to those who live together. Consequently, Saint Stanislaus will be able to accommodate approximately 50 units (with additional seating along the walls of the church and along the back), and Holy Trinity can accommodate approximately 75 units, as we will be utilizing the Social Hall. With this in mind, unless or until a better system can be devised, we are asking parishioners who are interested in attending a Sunday Mass **to call their respective Parish Office to make a "reservation."** Once we reach our maximum capacity, additional reservations will have first priority to make a reservation to attend Mass on the following Sunday.

Third, for a number of reasons, I will be the only celebrant of public Masses for the time being, until we iron out all the "kinks" and can be reasonably assured that we are operating in the safest manner possible. Although Parish Council has frequently discussed the need to alter the Mass schedule in a manner that would allow one priest to cover both parishes, the current circumstances have necessitated a change in Mass times. To begin this process of phasing in public celebrations, there **will not be a Saturday Mass** offered; in time, we will reincorporate the Saturday Mass. **Sunday's celebration will take place at 9:00AM at Saint Stanislaus Church and 10:30AM at Holy Trinity's Social Hall.**

Forth, the logic behind the Bishop's directives is to minimize exposure to the virus, both physically and environmentally, during the celebration of Mass. Physically, we will minimize or eliminate any contact between individuals and with any hard surfaces. For example, the exchange of the sign of peace and reception of the Precious Blood will remain absent from our celebrations. Also, doors will be propped open, all song books and missalettes will be removed, there will not be kneeling, collection baskets will not be passed, and so on. Environmentally, we will attempt to minimize the length of time we are in the buildings. For example, the unnecessary elements of the Mass will be excluded like the entrance, gift,

and recessional processions. Also, all Mass parts will not be sung but recited, homilies will be shorter in length, and so on. In short, expect a dramatically different “feel” when attending Mass. In order for us to go public on the 19th, as anticipated, we will need volunteers to serve our communities’ as “disinfectors” after our celebrations. Additionally, we will need volunteers to serve as “escorts” as people gather, for the communion reception, and as people depart. Escorts will also be responsible for making sure every individual is wearing a mask for the duration of the celebration and for making sure we do not exceed our maximum capacity. If you are interested and able to serve in one or another ministry, ***please contact the Parish Office as soon as possible*** as both ministries will require some brief “training.” The company who has supplied our disinfecting agent will have representatives in town on July 15th to train the cleaners. I will train escorts on July 14th.

I would like to make an urgent appeal for contributions to the “Covid-19 Response Fund.” The chemicals, dispensers, and personal protective equipment that was required came at a significant cost for which neither parish had budgeted. In conjunction with generally lower offertory collections during this time of pandemic, our financial situation is concerning. If you are able to help us off-set this expense, simply indicate such on your donation.

I want to thank our Parish Council for their wisdom, prudence, and guidance through these trying time; their commitment to our communities, and their care for every individual’s health and safety has been extraordinarily evident in our deliberations. I also want to thank all of you for your patient endurance. I know some will receive this news of our decision to go public with ecstatic joy; I am also aware that a significant number of people are gravely ambivalent. Personally, I simply think it is unreasonable to think that we could remain closed for the duration of the pandemic, which could last for months if not years. Secondly: 1) we know the virus is out there; 2) we know what it can do if contracted; 3) we know how to best mitigate against it (masks, social distancing, hand washing, etc.); 4) I trust that people can make prudent decisions for our own safety and that of others, decisions that are genuinely “pro-life” in the truest sense of the phrase.

Be assured of my ongoing prayers and petitions for you, and please do the same for me! I never envisioned navigating two communities through a global pandemic crisis during the first year of my first pastorate! I have tried to do so with a constant appeal to the “Good Shepherd,” in whose Spirit I have attempted to lead us through this. Finally, be patient with me and others as we begin this process of re-opening. I am certain that innocent mistakes will be made, unexpected things will be inadvertently overlooked, and uncertainty will lead to confusion. This is the first time any of us have had to contend with such circumstances but, as has become something of a mantra, “we are in this together.”

Health and Abundant Blessings,

Fr. Jason A. Glover, S.T.L.
Pastor