



St. Joseph Catholic Church
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sjccotati.org

March 23, 2021

My Dear People of St. Joseph's Parish,

By now you have all heard that the US Supreme Court ruled that Churches can hold indoor worship services. Although we will be moving to have our Masses inside the church please note that the obligation to come to Mass on Sundays is still dispensed because of the COVID-19 pandemic. I want to remind you that just because we are dispensed from attending Mass of Sundays, we are not dispensed from keeping the Lord's Day holy. Please try to watch an online/televised Mass and dedicate some time of the day to prayer and reading the daily readings. That being said we will try to broadcast the Masses on FM if you would like to sit in your car for Mass because you still don't feel completely safe at an indoor Mass. Since the vaccine distribution is going slow, we must continue to practice an abundance of caution.

We have volunteers who will sanitize the pews after each Mass. **One rule to remember: Please avoid touching anything in the church**, like doors, door handles, kneelers, statues/images, walls, the ends of the pews as you walk by them etc. Keep your hands in your pockets, if you have to. We will open and close the doors for you so that you do not have to touch anything.

Our new Mass schedule beginning in March will be:

Saturday: 5:00 pm – English (Live-streamed)

7:00 pm - Spanish

Sunday: 11:30 am – Spanish (Live-streamed)

Wednesday: 9:00 am – English

First Friday: 9:00 am – English

Live-streamed Mass will also be uploaded to the parish YouTube channel.

Indoor Masses at St. Joseph's will be very different, and we will have strict requirements that everyone must follow:

1. If you or someone in your household has tested positive for the COVID-19 virus or are feeling sick (even with the flu), please do not come to Mass until you and they have tested negative for the virus.
 - a. If you have had direct contact with someone who has the COVID-19 virus, please do not come to Mass until you have been tested and are given your results that state that you do not have the virus.
 - b. Please remember that some people who have the COVID-19 virus do not have symptoms, but they can still spread it to others.

- c. If you have travelled outside of California or outside of the country, please do not come to Mass for at least 10 days after and are symptom free.
2. Reservations will no longer be required.
 - a. The first 100 people to arrive will be admitted into the church.
 - b. After we reach our capacity of 100 people you are welcome to listen to the Mass in your cars or sit outside of the church.
3. You will only be allowed to enter the church building through the main entrance doors, which will remain open so that no one has to touch the doors.
 - a. The main doors will open 20 minutes before the beginning of Mass.
 - b. People with disabilities may enter through the southeast door near the St. Joseph rose garden.
 - c. There will be tape on the floor outside the church to keep you six feet apart as you line up to come to Mass.
 - d. If you are late you will not be able to come in because the greeters will be busy with other duties.
 - e. All doors still function as emergency exits in case of an emergency.
 - f. The side doors will be open for ventilation purposes only, but PLEASE DO NOT enter through the side doors.
 - g. We will also have our furnaces running in “fan mode” since they are also capable of bringing in air from the outside in order to help with air circulation.
4. Please remember to keep a safe social distance even in the parking lot.
5. If you need to enter/leave the main entrance of the church by way of the stairs, please sanitize your hands before and after touching the handrails.
6. Everyone who comes to Mass will have to wear a mask.
 - a. Your mask will need to cover your mouth and nose at all times.
 - a. Please do not remove your masks at any time.
 - b. The only exception will be for consuming the Host during Holy Communion.
 - b. Remember that the basic masks do not protect you from the germs of others, it protects others from you spreading your germs.
 - c. If you wear a plastic face shield you still have to wear a mask under the face shield because the face shield may protect you from others, but it will not protect others from you.
 - d. Please note that bandanas and “gator masks” are not effective, so please avoid coming to Mass with those items.
 - a. If you come to Mass wearing one of these, you will be asked to wear a real mask.
 - e. The only exception will be the celebrant priest and the limited number of acolytes/ministers, only while in the sanctuary.
 - a. Those of us in the sanctuary will keep a very safe distance from each other in order to accomplish this
 - f. If the deacon is present, he will also serve as lector. If not, a lector will be assigned.
7. Before entering the church, a greeter will take your temperature with a touchless thermometer and you will be asked if you attest that you are symptom free.
 - a. If you do not have a fever, are symptom free and you meet the requirements of item 1 of this outline you will be allowed in.
 - b. If you do have a fever or do not meet the requirements of item 1 of this outline, please do not even remain outside for Mass.

8. Everyone will have to practice safe social distancing at all times: before entering the church, in the pews, in line for Holy Communion, and exiting the church. However, people of the same household may sit together.
9. There will be a basket at the main entrance for you to place your offering as you enter the church. Please do this before Mass.
 - a. Since there is no collection during the Mass there will be no procession with the gifts.
 - b. You can also mail your offering to the parish office.
 - c. Please consider using our online giving system found on the parish website sjccotati.org.
 - d. Thank you for your generosity.
10. A volunteer will guide you to the pew where you will sit for the duration of the Mass.
 - a. Please try to avoid touching the pews, pew pockets or kneelers with your hands.
 - b. To lower/raise the kneelers please use your feet.
 - c. Please do not touch any of the images/statues in the church.
 - d. Please do not come into the sacristy or the sanctuary.
11. The restrooms will be available only for emergencies.
 - a. The restroom doors will remain open.
 - b. Only one person will be allowed in the restroom at a time.
12. The public drinking fountain cannot be used.
 - a. Please bring your own water if you need to drink water during Mass.
13. We are still not permitted to sing while inside (the Supreme Court upheld this part).
 - a. "Choirs and singing should be avoided, as they are likely a high aerosol generating activity that could spread COVID-19 or other viruses." (From the document *ROAD MAP TO Re-Opening Our Catholic Churches Safely*)
 - b. Keeping the above in mind, when saying your responses to the Mass it is preferred that you do not raise your voice.
14. There will be no missalettes or hymnals in the pews.
 - a. You may bring your missalettes from home.
 - b. If you need a copy of a missalette to keep, please contact the parish office.
15. The votive candles will be covered and not available for use. The less things we touch in the church, the safer it will be for all.
16. The distribution of Holy Communion will be at its appropriate time within the Mass.
 - a. This will be done by rows of pews and led by the volunteers, while maintaining a six-foot social distance from others.
 - b. Even if you are not going to receive Holy Communion walk with the people from your pew so that the others in the row do not get too close to you when they are processing.
 - c. People will process by way of the side aisles and return to their pews by way of the center aisle.
 - d. The extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion (EMHC) will wear a mask.
 - e. Holy Communion will only be distributed on the hand.
 - f. The communion kneelers will not be available.
 - g. We will have hand sanitizer for you to sanitize your hands before receiving Holy Communion.
 - h. When you receive the Host in your hand:
 - a. Step to the side six feet from the priest/EMHC
 - b. Face the priest/EMHC

- c. Remove your mask, consume the Host, put your mask back on and return to your pew.
- 17. Please exit the church immediately after Mass concludes because we need time to sanitize the church before the next Mass.
 - a. Please lower the kneelers in your pew because it will make disinfecting the church faster.
 - b. Also, please do not congregate in or outside the church afterwards.

I know that some of this may seem extreme, but we are living in a very different environment right now. These rules are for the health and safety of all here at the parish so let's err on the side of caution rather than risk contributing to the rise of this pandemic. I thank you all for your patience, understanding, cooperation and support as we begin our reopen our church building for public Masses.

Your Servant in Christ,

Fr. Raúl Lemus,
Pastor
St. Joseph's Catholic Church