

PARISH LIFE IN THE COVID-19 GREEN PHASE

Greetings in the Lord!

This past Friday, June 26, 2020 our county entered into the government established "**Green Phase**" of preventive measures against the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

What does this mean for our Church?

A few minor changes from the former phase apply, they are:

1. **Seating capacity** has been increased from 50% to 75% of total church seating capacity. St. John's seating capacity is 900.
2. **Face coverings** such as masks are no longer mandatory but strongly recommended by our Diocese and our Pastor.
3. **Collection of the weekly offering** may be made by either ushers using long handled collection baskets or a single large collection basket placed in a secure location within the church.
4. **Communion Ministers** may resume their ministry of bringing communion to the home bound. However, written authorization must be obtained verifying clearance before our Communion Minister is permitted to bring Communion to their assigned patient. However, since nursing homes continue to warn against visitors during this time, our Pastor, Fr. Lucas has decided it is in the best interest of all that our parish wait until the formal "OPEN PHASE" before resuming this ministry. During this time, if any parishioner is in need of communion, this task will continue to be handled by our priests.
5. **Small Group Ministry Meetings** inside our church may be held in the Chapel, Narthex, and in the Marian Room provided social distancing is practiced. The disinfecting of all surfaces used such as table tops, chairs, door knobs, light switches, and any other surfaces touched during the meeting, is the responsibility of the group using the space. Gloves, Rags and disinfectant is provided by the parish.
And as before, all Ministry meetings are to be scheduled through the parish office to avoid any conflict of use of space between our groups.

What remains unchanged:

1. Although our Mass and Confession schedules have been fully restored in our parish since June 6th, the faithful continue to be dispensed by the Archbishop from the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation until further notice during this continued period of COVID-19 precautions. However, we must be mindful that Sunday still remains the Lord's Day and we should honor it with continued worship and prayer by viewing a live streamed Mass and making a spiritual Communion.
Please continue to visit our parish website at www.stjohnsottsville.org for spiritual resources, sites for live streaming of the Mass, and updates coming from the Diocese.
2. Social distancing within the church remains unchanged.

3. The use of hymnals or any communal materials is prohibited. *A disposable, single use Worship Aid (Prayers & Readings of the Mass) is available on a table in the rear of the church for you to take to your seat with you. You are to take this with you following Mass. Nothing should be left behind in the pews or pew pockets.*
4. Our Holy Water font will remain dry.
5. There will be no distribution of the Precious Blood. *The faithful are reminded that the body, blood of Jesus Christ is fully present in both species during the distribution of Communion. Hence when we receive the Eucharist we are receiving both the body & blood of Jesus Christ.*
6. The exchange of the Lord's greeting of "Peace Be With You" is to continue as a no contact exchange. A simple nod to those in your immediate area is considered proper. The waving across pews and the holding up of the peace symbol is not considered an appropriate depiction of the intention behind our Lord's greeting of "Peace Be With You."
7. The limitation on Liturgical music remains in place as does the use of a single Cantor and musician.
8. Gatherings inside the church Narthex and immediately outside the entrance/exit doors is still considered counter-productive to social distancing.
9. The use of separate smaller chapels for daily Mass remain closed at this time to assure proper social distancing is practiced.
10. Continued frequent (weekly) professional Sanitizing of all surfaces within the church, as well as the wiping down of pews and door handles between Masses remains in effect.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me through the parish office.

God Bless,
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