

Sacred Heart - St. Joseph Parish
227 S.W. Van Buren Street
Topeka, Kansas 66603

Dear Parishioners,

Hello from your Pastor! I sure have missed all of you. This recent period has been a very challenging time for all of us and one in which we long to return to the presence of our being together as a parish family for worship and reception of the sacraments. **It was decided by the Topeka Region that public masses in the parishes of Topeka will begin on Saturday, May 16.** In planning for this resumption of public Masses and worship in our parish of Sacred Heart - St. Joseph, we will take the following steps for safety purposes and in keeping with the directives of the Archdiocese and respecting the guidelines put forth by our civil authorities to prevent the spread of the Covid19 virus. **Please make sure you read toward the end of my letter, that the dispensation of the Obligation to attend Mass will remain in effect for some time. That means that you are not obligated to attend Mass especially if you are uncomfortable about attending, elderly, more vulnerable, or more at risk to the virus.** We will adopt the following measures:

1. All parishioners are asked and encouraged to wear a mask for all our public gatherings which includes masses, funerals, weddings, etc. **YOU ARE TO BRING YOUR OWN MASK. WEARING A MASK IS A REQUIREMENT.**
2. Hand sanitizer will be available at all entrances of the Church. Since supplies are in high demand, if possible, please bring your hand sanitizer from home as well. If anyone would like to donate hand sanitizer and wipes to the parish, we would welcome it.
3. All Eucharistic Ministers will gently drop the host in the outstretched hands of the communicants, without making any physical contact of their hands with the communicant's hands and by keeping a distance. (Communicants are strongly encouraged to refrain from receiving directly on the tongue due to what is known about the transmission of the virus).
4. All Eucharistic Ministers will distribute Holy Communion to the parishioner's, pew by pew, by going down an assigned aisle (assigned by Fr. Tim). Therefore, parishioners will not leave their pews to form lines to receive Holy Communion as we have done in the past, rather Eucharistic Ministers will bring it to them while parishioners remain in their pews.
5. To assist with social distancing, parishioners will be seated in certain designated sections of the pews. This will be accomplished by reserving certain sections of the pews marked as "no seating" and in a staggered form throughout the Church. This is to be strictly followed.
6. Missalette have been removed and will not be used to reduce the transmission of the virus and to reduce the amount of cleaning after each mass.
7. Avoid Congregational singing - therefore all mass parts will be recited and a cantor will sing only the opening and closing song.
8. We will use the collection baskets with the extended handles at all masses. Collection baskets that need to be passed to one another will not be used.
9. Holy water in the entrances of each Church will not be used.
10. After each mass, Father Tim will ask for volunteers to clean the pews, door handles, and bathrooms.
11. The offertory gifts of bread, water, and wine will not be presented by offertory bearers in procession form. **Therefore, there will be no assigned Gift Bearers.**
12. **Greeters** will no longer greet parishioners at the entrances of the Church until further notice.
13. The use of **Altar Servers** for mass will cease. The priest will celebrate the mass with no altar servers.
14. For social distancing purposes to prevent the spread of the virus, Father Tim will no longer greet parishioners after mass at the exits of the Church. Father Tim will enter and exit the Church by way of the sacristy – no processions.

15. There will be no handshakes or gestures of physical contact during the sign of peace. Parishioners will be asked to make a no-contact gesture of peace.
16. **Ushers** with gloves on will be asked to distribute BULLETINS to parishioners upon their exiting of Church. **Bulletins will not be available before the masses. Ushers** will open the doors at the end of the masses to avoid parishioners touching the door handles upon their exiting the Church.
17. At the conclusion of each mass (after the final hymn), parishioners will be dismissed by sections to avoid crowds and "bunching" at entrances and exits of the Church.
18. Parishioners who are sick or showing any symptoms are encouraged to stay home.
19. For Confessions - Confessions will no longer take place prior to the Sacred Heart Church 4:00 pm Saturday Mass and St. Joseph Church Sunday 8:00 am Mass to avoid lines forming and best practices for social distancing. Therefore, instead, Confessions will be heard every Wednesday evening from 6:00 pm until 7:00 pm at St. Joseph Church beginning, May 20 until further notice. Confessions will be heard outside by the St. Joseph grotto and in case of inclement weather on the front porch of St. Joseph Rectory. Confessionals will not be used nor the use of the church.
20. **We are allowed only enough occupancy for social distancing practices to be followed, therefore seating is limited. Please be understanding of this and realize that it is a must for us to keep the proper spacing.**
21. The Adoration Chapel at St. Joseph Church will remain closed until further notice.
22. There are not to be any non-essential meetings held during this current time. (Knights of Columbus, Youth Group, Bible Studies, etc.) Nor will there be any funeral lunches.
23. **The Archbishop's dispensation from the Sunday Obligation of attending mass will remain in effect. Therefore, those who are elderly, who are more vulnerable, or are not comfortable with attending mass at this time, as well as ANY parishioner, are dispensed from the obligation to attend. It will be no mortal sin to not attend mass at this time. This will remain in effect until further notice.** Because of this, we will continue to offer weekend mass by means of our parish Facebook and website page on the internet for those who chose to stay at home.
SacredHeartStJosephCatholic.org
24. We will have our weekly daily masses as normally scheduled. However, on Fridays, there will be only one mass offered. The 6:30 am Mass at St. Joseph's Church will only be offered. There will be no 8:00 am mass at Sacred Heart Church on Fridays. To avoid having to clean the Church after each weekday mass, as well as conserve on cleaning supplies, we will consider celebrating weekday masses outdoors, weather permitting. This will remain in effect throughout the next few months.

As you can see, we have many new practices to adopt to keep a safer and sanitary environment. We are relying on each other to make this happen. We want to do our best so we can continue to gather for the celebration of mass and the sacraments. I believe we can do it and do it well.

I also want to thank all of you for your prayers and support during these difficult times. They have meant so much to me personally. Thanks also for your generous hearts in your ongoing financial and spiritual support of our parish in this time that we were not able to physically gather as one on the weekends. Thanks to those who have continued to maintain our two campuses by your physical labors. Thanks to our parish staff and the staff, faculty, and administration of Holy Family School in working hard to keep us all operating. Thanks also to Lisa Deghand and the Sisters of Charity for assisting me in providing the masses on our website.

We continue to rely on the help of the Lord to lead us and bring His healing grace to the world. We continue to invoke our Blessed Mother Mary for her assistance and intercession.

In Christ,



Fr. Tim Haberkorn