

Holy Cross Catholic Church

June 3, 2020

Dear Parishioners of Holy Cross.

We have received approval to open our church building for the public Celebration of Masses, Sacraments and private prayer.

The closure of the church building and suspension of the public celebration of Mass and the Sacraments was almost overnight.

The return to normalcy will be gradual. For the safety of the most vulnerable among us, when we gather, we must take certain precautions. Archbishop Gomez has given guidelines.

My plan on how these will be observed has been approved.

Covid-19 virus is still a threat today. It spreads rapidly. The damage to the body is severe. In reopening the parish, we must keep this in mind. Today we have a better understanding of the threat and how we can mitigate its damage.

Personal responsibility is principal in observing the process of reopening.

The dispensation from the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of obligation is still in effect. If one is elderly and weak in health or have experienced certain serious medical conditions, he or she should remain at home and continue to watch Mass on the Internet or TV. Holy Cross will continue to live stream the 10:00 AM and 12:00 PM Mass. If you are healthy but live with one who is vulnerable, I would ask that you stay home so to minimized the possibility of bringing an illness home.

Masks are required at Masses, celebration of the Sacraments and any gatherings at Holy Cross.

Come to church with **washed hands** or when you arrive, immediately wash them in the restrooms off the vestibule. It is wise to have a personal size bottle of hand sanitizer.

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Do not touch your mouth, eyes and nose. Please avoid touching the Tabernacle and statues.

All the missals and song books have been removed. There is not to be shared materials. Since the missals have been purchased, a stack of books can be found in the entrance of the church. Please take one as your personal copy. What we will do in the future still needs exploration. The reading of the Mass can be found on the internet. Bring your smart phone or tablet to Mass. Music sheets still needs some thinking. We will try and use songs that are familiar.

Social distancing within any of the buildings on church property must be maintained. In the church building, traffic must flow in one direction so as to minimize contact. Entrance into the church building is through the east glass doors of the church building, off the parking lot. Exit from the church building will be from the northern doors (by Saint Joseph Statue) and southern doors (Mary's Statue).

Blue tape throughout the nave will help in keeping the proper distance. A pew with blue tape is closed. A blue tape "X" on a pew means to kept spot unoccupied. Those who share the same residence may sit together. In the Communion or Confession line, the blue tape on the floor will help keep proper distance.

Only the Body of Christ will be given for Holy Communion. While this pandemic exists, the Eucharist will be placed in the hand. When approaching the priest, deacon and minister, acknowledge the Sacrament (AMEN) with the mask in place. Then step to the side, lower the mask, consume the Sacrament, then resume walking.

Holy Communion will be given after the final prayer and blessing. Afterward, you are to come forward to receive Communion or a blessing. Then you are to exit the church building through the side doors.

After each Mass or gathering, the church building **must be sanitized** and made ready for the next service. We have the equipment to properly sanitize the pews. At each Mass we need volunteers. If you can help, when you come to church, please check at the cleaning stations in the vestibule and see if help is still needed. There is a fellow parishioner who volunteered to organize the after-Mass sanitation. Clear instructions will be given. The time period between Masses is short, so much help is need.

The most challenging part of the protocols for the reopening is the occupancy. At each Mass or gathering, we are limited to only 100 people. This is set and must be followed.

I am confident we can self-police and not have Archbishop Gomez' permission removed. Or have the civil authorities apply a penalty. When total occupancy is reached, the doors will be closed. Please accept this gracefully. I am exploring ways, where those who did not get in because maximum capacity was reached, would still have a moment of prayer and Holy Communion. News to follow for next Sunday.

I ask you to consider another day of the week to dedicate your worship to the Lord and receive your Communion. I have added more daily Masses to our Schedule. Sunday through live stream or TV will keep the day Holy. A daily Mass may be a source of spiritual strength during this crisis period.

The responsibility of maintaining a Catholic presence falls on us all. At this time, many families are financially compromised. The staff and I are being practical and good stewards. These past weeks, we were forced to take money from our reserves. Baskets will not be passed hand to hand. If you are able to contribute, baskets will be put around the sanctuary for the weekly offering. The offering can be given at the Sunday Masses or the daily Masses.

Before the pandemic, Holy Cross had a beautiful practice of bringing can and dry good from the family pantry or days shopping. Now, such staples are very much needed. Now that the church building is open, you might consider filling the shelves of Catholic Charities.

I know what I would like for Holy Cross. I know what I am asked to do. I know what I can do. There is still much that still needs to be done. Vigilance and time will push me forward.

Our Lord promised not to abandon us. He gave us His Spirit to guide. Please pray for me, my staff, ministers, the deacons and volunteers of Holy Cross.

Daily, I ask the Lord to keep all the people of Holy Cross safe. May He bring happiness to you now and in the Kingdom.

In Christ Jesus,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Msgr. Joseph Hernandez". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Msgr. Joseph Hernandez.

PS. Los correos electrónicos que tengo no indican si prefiere recibir mensajes en español. Si es, por favor dime que la preferencia de usted es español.