

May 29, 2020

Dear Parishioners of Saint Petronille,

Praised be Jesus Christ!

### **The Problem – Need for Calm**

A great deal of information has been put out in the last couple of weeks regarding the reopening of churches. Some of this information is confusing and conflicts. I think we want to remember two months ago when the shelter-at-home order was first issued. There was a great deal of confusion resulting from our leadership trying to cope with a new situation and issuing updates on, almost, a daily basis. As our community attempts to reopen, we are entering a similar time of uncertainty. I would like to provide some clarity regarding the approach that Saint Petronille will take in the coming weeks, while, at the same time, asking your patience as we try to address an ever-changing landscape.

### **Our Priorities**

Our first priority is your safety and the safety of our staff, deacons and priests. Any decisions we make will be made with your safety in mind, but will require the cooperation of all those entering our buildings whether for Mass, confession, personal prayer, weddings, baptisms or funerals.

Our next priority, on a par with the first, is your spiritual welfare. It is important for our spiritual, emotional and even physical well-being that you be able to come to encounter the Lord in the sacraments and receive the spiritual nourishment for our pilgrimage through life. As a society, our spiritual health is more important now than ever. Our Lord never gives us a cross too heavy to bear; however, we must use all of the means He gives us to help carry those burdens.

These are our two priorities and our decisions will be made according to them and not according to any political games being played. Our priority is the Lord and His people.

### **Our Approach**

Our goal is to open the parish for the celebration of weekday and Sunday Mass, confessions, and regular times of prayer soon. In order to open safely, we have formed a committee to address three principle areas: Greeting (helping those coming to worship to know the safe practices for being in our buildings), cleaning (making sure the facilities are regularly sanitized), and setup (making sure the buildings are prepared so all participants will be safe inside of them).

Opening up is far more difficult than closing down, because of the regular sanitizing required, social distancing and other precautions being taken which are labor intensive on staff and volunteers. Saint Petronille will abide by the procedures set forth by the Diocese of Joliet in managing these facilities, organizing those entering the facilities and the celebration of the sacraments. Saint Petronille submitted her application for certification (allowing us to reopen for Masses) 6 days ago. We have been told that we will get a response on Monday. We will inform you by email when this permission is granted and when this plan will be implemented.

### **How will the reopening happen?**

When we have obtained this certification from the Diocese of Joliet, we will first open for daily Mass observing seating and sanitizing guidelines and then two weekends later, open for Sunday Masses. Saint Petronille will offer her regular Mass schedule (6:15 am and 8 am, Monday through Saturday; 5 pm on Saturdays; 7:30 am, 9:30 am, 11:30 am and 5 pm on Sundays); however, at all of the Masses on Saturday evening and Sunday, you will be able to be seated in either the church or the PLC. The Mass in the PLC will be broadcast on the large screen and Communion will be distributed at that Mass. This will allow 78 people to attend Mass in the church and 79 people to attend Mass in the PLC at every Mass time on Sundays and Saturday evening. During the week, Masses will be held only in the church permitting 78 participants at each Mass. These procedures require that the numbers of people allowed in our facilities has been revised to about 10-20% of original capacity. Eventually and weather permitting, we will also be having outdoor Masses, Mass under the stars, in our main parking lot at 8 pm on Sunday evenings.

Please notice that the procedures being implemented go far beyond any being practiced by grocery stores, home improvement stores, restaurants or any other organization that is reopening.

We will let you know when we can begin. Please watch your email from the parish.

### **What are these procedures?**

Basically, the procedures which are the same for every parish in the Diocese of Joliet:

1. Wearing of masks while in any of the parish facilities.
2. Seating of each worshipper 6 ft. from any other worshipper.
3. Sanitization of the facility after each worship service.
4. Sanitization of hands when entering the building and prior to receiving communion.
5. Revision of liturgical norms reducing singing, because of the danger of contamination that singing causes.
6. Permitting no more than the assigned number into the building during each service.
7. The Bishop will continue to dispense from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass and recommends that any high-risk individual because of age or underlying medical condition continue to remain at home.

We will be posting signage within the buildings and sending more detailed instructions when the time comes to open for Masses.

### **Volunteers Desperately Needed**

If you want your church to open for Mass, you are under 65 years of age and have no underlying medical conditions, we need your help. We cannot open the church without significant volunteer help. We are in particular need of help for greeters and for cleaners. If you are willing to volunteer, please email the parish at: [reopen@stpetchurch.org](mailto:reopen@stpetchurch.org).

Let me be clear: if we do not have enough volunteers, Saint Petronille church will not reopen.

Let us continue to pray for one another, for our church and for all those struggling from isolation or with Covid-19. May Almighty God bless you and keep you.

In Christ,

Fr. Thomas Milota