

Celina Cluster

Immaculate Conception, Our Lady of Guadalupe, St. Teresa



May 20, 2020

Dear Celina Cluster Parishioner,

We celebrated my mom's 94th birthday on May 7th with a drive by celebration. The very next day, May 8th, the Catholic Bishops of Ohio announced the resumption of public Masses on May 25th. *(Due to the increasing number of positive cases in Mercer County, medical professionals and area pastors have advised that we delay resumption of Masses one week to June 1st.)* Mom had two questions. First, when she could go back to church, and second, when she could go back to the beauty shop to have her hair done. The beauty shop was out of my league, but regarding public Masses I said, "You know mom, you really should not be coming back to Church just yet. You are one of the 'older folks' and high risk for health complications. (Once upon a time, mom and dad used to muse who those older folks were not realizing they were the older folks in their 70's and 80's). We love you and do not want you taking that kind of risk." I assured her that she could continue watching online and we could arrange for one of her children to bring her communion. She pushed back a little and asked, "what about weekdays?" I again cautioned her about going out and risking exposure, but also assured her that the Sunday obligation has been dispensed until further notice and that any Mass during the week would "count" just the same as Sunday and with much less risk of exposure with fewer folks.

If it's advice I'm willing to share with mom, it's certainly advice I am also willing to share with all parishioners of the Celina Cluster. As the Catholic Bishops have instructed, **"The Catholic faithful who reside in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati and all other Catholics in the archdiocese continue to be dispensed from the obligation of attending Sunday Mass. Those who are at risk or fearful that they or their family might become sick are encouraged to stay home and join the Church by viewing live-streamed Masses."**

We understand the yearning desire in so many to get back to some sense of normalcy and routine, something that is familiar and safe, and assures us that everything is going to be okay. What better place to begin than the very gift of the Eucharist that is truly food for the journey? At the same time, we need to remember that we live in a time of pandemic when the spread of the coronavirus is still increasing. We need to take those necessary precautions of staying at home if elderly and at risk of health complications, wearing a face mask if we do go out, washing our hands regularly with warm soapy water and/or using hand sanitizer if necessary and social distancing. These are health and safety measures intended to protect ourselves, our loved ones and all those we encounter.

Enclosed are guidelines from the Archdiocese of Cincinnati for resuming public Masses at Immaculate Conception/Our Lady of Guadalupe/ St. Teresa. The guidelines for your respective parish were reviewed and discussed by parishioners from each parish who are health and safety professionals, and adapted accordingly with the health and safety of all parishioners in mind. Please note, that while the safety precautions may not be as critical for you, they could be a matter of life and death for someone else in our parish family.

There are several points from the guidelines that we would like to highlight:

- All faithful are reminded they have been dispensed from their Sunday obligation, and thus their desire to participate in Mass could be fulfilled on any day of the week.
- All faithful are strongly encouraged to wear a face mask out of genuine love and concern for others, especially entering and leaving and whenever interacting with others. Use of hand sanitizer is also strongly encouraged.
- For IC & St. Teresa - Collection baskets will be placed at the entrances asking parishioners to make offering as they enter church. OLG ushers will continue using long handled baskets. Thank you for your continued generosity.
- One time use worship aides will be available for each Mass with recycle receptacles available after Mass.
- Every other pew will be used for seating each weekend Mass to assure social distancing and reduce the need for cleaning in between Masses. For the safety of all and to assure access for Eucharistic Ministers distributing Holy Communion in the empty rows of pews at each Mass, please respect and follow color designations for seating.
- Please begin seating in the front of the church, maximizing the full use of the church and pews with social distancing in mind.
- Holy Communion will be distributed to parishioners remaining in their pews by priest, deacon and EM's wearing masks. They will be using empty rows of pews to reach all parishioners.

Please be assured that we are doing everything we can to make the resumption of public Masses as safe as possible, but there are no full proof guarantees what is the best way. So again, if you have any doubt or question about returning to Church during the coronavirus pandemic, we encourage you to stay home and view online or perhaps attend during the week. While striving to keep everyone safe is our top priority, we also want to be hospitable and inviting, helping people feel welcomed back into the church after having been away for such a long time. There will likely be some awkwardness returning to Mass in church, and it may even happen that you are not able to sit in "your seat" in church, but please also know that over time, our new normal pattern of church will also resume.

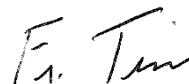
Our sincere hope is that we can do the best planning possible for the safe return to public Masses, those who are higher risk stay home and view online, perhaps come during the week, etc., and that we are able to safely accommodate all those who do gather creating a prayerful and welcoming celebration for all.

Let us pray that Jesus, the Good Shepherd will watch over us and all faithful once again gathering in church, keeping us safe, feeding us and ultimately showing us the way home.

Blessings and prayers,



Fr. Ken Schnipke, C.P.P.S.
Pastor



Fr. Tim McFarland, C.P.P.S.
Parochial Vicar