

Phased Reopening of Our Parish Church

My Dear Parish Family,

By now, you may have heard that the Bishop has asked for all parishes to open in a phased approach. [You can read the Bishop's letter and watch his video presentation on the phased approach [here](#).] The first phase, beginning May 18, will allow for all parishes in the Diocese to open the church building for visits of the faithful for private devotions and prayer. The second phase, beginning May 25, will allow for public Masses.

When you return to the Church for a visit or for Mass, some things will be different from the last time you were in Church, as you might expect.

Bishop's Dispensation

Before I talk about the realities and specifics of how this phased approach will affect our parish, I want to discuss one very important item. Out of great concern for your health and safety, the Bishop has extended his dispensation from the Sunday obligation for everyone! Read the Bishop's dispensation information below:

"It is imperative for us to realize that while progress has been made, ***the pandemic is not over by any means*** and we are obligated to continue cooperating with each other to do what we can to ensure the safety of ourselves and others and to prevent its return. In this context, I emphasize that ***all Catholics of the Diocese of Palm Beach are dispensed from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass and that this dispensation remains in effect until further notification***. This is meant to ensure the well-being and safety of all, not only the elderly and those who are at risk for illness, but anyone of any age who is making a prudent decision about their own well-being as well as that of others. Simply

stated, as we begin and continue the process of 'reopening,' ***no one is obliged or should feel obligated to come to church.***" [Emphasis added]

You must be aware that the church building is a place where many people are welcome. This means two things: (1) you may come in contact with many people and (2) other people may have touched the surfaces that you will touch.

While the parish will do its best to clean surfaces regularly, and while we will encourage "social distancing," we cannot guarantee that you will not come in contact with germs. While our church is a sacred space, the realities of the world do infringe upon it, especially in terms of communicable germs. Please use your best discretion about coming for Mass or visits.

If you are part of the more susceptible classes of people – such as those who are over 65, have an immunodeficiency, or have a chronic condition (especially a pulmonary condition) – you may not wish to expose yourself to the possibility of coming in contact with the coronavirus.

To assist you in staying safe, we will continue our daily and Sunday Masses online on our YouTube channel: [St. Paul of the Cross NPB](#) at this time. Please join us there, as you have been doing since March.

Phase 1: Visits to the Church

The Bishop has announced that church buildings will be open to the public for visits to pray before the Blessed Sacrament and for other private devotions.

St. Paul of the Cross Church will be open from 12 (Noon) to 4 PM Monday through Friday for private prayer. We will also open the Church on Saturday and Sunday from 9 AM to 1 PM for the same purpose. [Our full schedule will be listed at the end of this email.]

The Chapel and the Adoration Chapel will remain closed, as these spaces are too tight to allow for social distancing.

PLEASE NOTE: Only the side doors of the Church will be open, not the front doors nor the doors to the Chapel. The restrooms will be open for use, but we ask that you do not congregate in the vestibule, as noise from the vestibule easily enters the Church and disturbs those who are trying to pray.

While in the main Church for private visits, please maintain standard "social distancing" guidelines (6 feet apart from one another). You may wish to at least

skip a pew in between, as well as not sit directly in front or behind someone. You may also wish to wear a mask and gloves.

The Church is open for PRIVATE prayer. It is not to be used for social gathering or group prayers. Please be considerate of others as you make your visits.

Grotto

Our Lady's Grotto remains open for private prayer at all times, just as it always has. It is a wonderful place that lends itself to prayer, as long as people use it as such.

Please remember that this too is a place for PRIVATE prayer. It is not a place for social gatherings and chatter. Please remember that we must use "social distancing" in the Grotto as well. Please also remember to be considerate of others, as you pray in the Grotto.

Phases 2 & 3: Masses in the Church

Beginning May 25, all Masses will be celebrated in the Church at their regular times. [Please note that May 25 is Memorial Day and there will ONLY be a morning Mass at 8 AM. There will be NO evening (5:30 PM) Mass that day. Also the Church will not be available for private prayer visits that day; however, the Grotto is always available.]

According to the Bishop's letter, there are certain protocols to which we should adhere. Also, we may have some parish-specific protocols. Let's look at the Bishop's protocols and our parish-specific adjustments.

What new items or procedures will you find?

1. We will attempt to abide by "social distancing" protocols. We will sit in every other pew in the Church. The Chapel will remain closed and locked. There will also be guide markers in each open pew, showing approximately 6 feet apart. However, couples and families may sit together, of course.

2. Please note that that “social distancing” will greatly diminish the capacity of our Church. Only about 1/4 to 1/3 of our usual capacity will be available, which puts our new capacity around 200 people.
3. Everyone is required to wear a mask throughout the Mass. [Please note that the priest and deacon may not wear masks in the sanctuary. However, they will wear them for the distribution of the Eucharist.]
4. You may also wish to wear gloves, if you are concerned about touching public surfaces. **However, please be aware that you will not be able to receive the Eucharist if you are wearing gloves.** You must remove them before receiving the Eucharist. **Also, please be aware that you must receive the Eucharist in your hand only, not on your tongue.** [This is for your safety and the safety of the ministers of Holy Communion.]
5. We will try to provide hand sanitizer at the entrances to the Church. We will also ensure to the best of our abilities that surfaces in the church will be sanitized regularly. [Please remember my comment above about the church as a common space where many people will come.]
6. We will have, at most, one reader, in addition to the priest (and deacon).
7. The priest or deacon will give a BRIEF homily from the ambo, chair or sanctuary. [Good luck with the “brief” part.]
8. We will also attempt to maintain “social distancing” in the Communion line. [Obviously, you’ll have to get closer than six feet from the minister of Holy Communion to receive. No one’s arms are that long.]
9. The priest (and deacon) will enter from the sacristy and return there immediately after the final blessing and dismissal.
10. Everyone is asked to quietly leave the Church immediately after Mass.
11. Our parish bulletin will continue to be available online on our website by clicking “Bulletin” or at <https://paulcross.org/bulletins>.

The following items will be unavailable:

1. Missalettes, Music Books and Worship aids: If you feel that you need such items, please bring your own. Please also bring them home with you too.
2. There will be no choir or instrumental ensembles. Only one instrumentalist and one cantor will help us to sing our praises to the Lord, when they are available.
3. Holy Water fonts: The Holy Water fonts will be empty.
4. Collection baskets: Instead of passed baskets, baskets will be placed by the doors for you to drop off your collection. We are very grateful that many of you have been very generous in mailing in your contributions or using our online service. You can still mail in or drop off your donations at

the Parish Office. Please consider online donations. Online donations are safe and they are consistent. You can register for online giving by clicking on the button on our homepage or at the following location:

www.osvonlinegiving.com/.

5. There will be no presentation of the gifts. The bread and wine will already be in the sanctuary. We will also continue passing our Vocations Chalice from family to family outside of Mass times.
6. No shaking or holding of hands, such as during the Our Father or Sign of Peace.
7. No distribution of the Precious Blood, except for the Priest.
8. No one, except the priest and the deacon, will be in the sanctuary during the Mass. If we do not have a deacon available, a reader or Extraordinary Minister may also enter the sanctuary at the appropriate time. We will not have altar servers, neither adult nor children, and we will not have any additional assistance to the priest during the preparation of the gifts, except by the deacon.
9. No social gatherings before or after Mass – in the Church, in the parking lot or on Church grounds. Please use the time before Mass and as you leave immediately after Mass for PRIVATE prayer, not for group prayer or socializing. [Sadly for me, this means I will not be able to greet people as they enter and leave Mass – and no coffee and donuts!]
10. No one will be present at the Welcome Desk. Instead, the Parish Office will be open from 9 AM to 1 PM on Saturdays and Sundays for your assistance.

Remember that the Bishop has extended his dispensation for the Sunday obligation until further notice. Please also remember that we will continue to make Daily and Sunday Masses available on our [YouTube channel](#) at this time.

Communion for the Homebound

During this phased reopening, we will still be unable to bring the Eucharist to the homebound, out of concern for the safety of our homebound parishioners and our Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion. However, the people in this ministry love what they do and I believe that they will continue to try to keep contact with our homebound in some way, such as by telephone.

Priests will be available for Anointing of the Sick and Last Rites, especially in the cases of emergency. Also, priests will be available for confession by appointment only at this time.

Parish Office

The Parish Office has returned to our regular business hours at this time. Those hours are M-F 9 AM to 5 PM and Sat & Sun. 9 AM to 1 PM. You may call or visit the office during these times. As mentioned above, if you have an emergency need for a priest, please feel free to call anytime.

Religious Shop

Our Religious Shop will continue to be open by appointment only.

Ministries and Facilities

In order to respect the CDC and other government guidelines and our own Diocesan directives, all ministry meetings, including Knights of Columbus, Columbiettes, Prayer groups, and Bible studies remain cancelled until further notice.

Outreach Ministries

Great News! All of our Outreach Ministries, such as our ministry to the poor, Van Ministry, St. Vincent de Paul and our Food Distribution, will continue as we have

since March, respecting the CDC and Diocesan protocols and directives. The need continues to be great at a time like this. Because of your generous donations, we have done a fantastic job responding to many of those needs so far, especially through our High Five for Workers campaign, which fed hundreds of families, and our Stimulus for Service campaign, which is already assisting people with living expenses. If you would like to help us continue these valuable ministries of love for our neighbor, please contact the Parish Office.

Parish Schedule

May 18 – May 22 (Noon to 4 PM): Church open for private prayer only

May 23 – May 24 (9 AM to 1 PM): Church open for private prayer only

May 25: 8 AM Memorial Day Mass. The Church will be closed immediately after Mass. The Parish Office will also be closed all day for the holiday. There will be NO evening (5:30 PM Mass)

May 26 – May 29: 8 AM and 5:30 PM Mass. Church will close immediately after Mass and open for private prayer Noon to 4 PM.

May 30: 8 AM Mass. Church will remain open for private prayer until 1 PM.

May 30: 5 PM Mass. Vigil Mass for Pentecost Sunday.

May 31: 7:30 AM, 9 AM, 10:45 AM and 5 PM Masses. Pentecost Sunday.

June 1 and later: All regularly scheduled Mass times. Church will close immediately after Mass. Church will be open M-F Noon to 4 PM and Sat/Sun 9 AM to 1 PM for PRIVATE prayer only.

Keep in Touch With YOUR Parish Family

Please know that you are always part of our family, and we want you to feel connected to your parish family. You can stay up to date on the parish by checking out our website [paulcross.org] and reading our bulletin [paulcross.org/bulletins]. You can also visit us on social media through our [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), or [Twitter](#) accounts @paulcrossNPB.

We also want to encourage you to stay connected to one another, especially if you know someone who might be alone. This can be a very anxious time for many people, and hearing from a friend can make all the difference.

Please know that you are always in the prayers of the clergy and staff of St. Paul of the Cross, and we ask for your prayers too.

We are a community. We are a family. We are St. Paul of the Cross.

May God bless you, your family and the Parish Family of St. Paul of the Cross,

Fr. Tom