

# SAINT TERESA CHURCH

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June 1, 2020

Dear Parishioners and Friends of Saint Teresa Church,

Grace and peace be with you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ! Father John and I miss seeing you, and we appreciate your prayers and support. So with this mailing, I am happy to give you good news about returning to Mass and sacraments. (This is a preview of what we are going to do, without knowing the exact days when each part will happen.) I also want to introduce you to two great ways that will help both parishioners and parish: **Flocknote** and **WeShare**. **Flocknote** is for communications, **WeShare** is for contributions. I hope that you will give them a try.

The important news today is that His Eminence Cardinal Dolan has approved a careful plan for returning us to public worship. We are already in the first phase, with our church doors open for your visits and prayer before the Blessed Sacrament every day from 9am to 4pm. Subject to health and safety conditions, we will move to small groups for Baptisms and Marriages; Distribution of Holy Communion Outside of Mass; Daily Masses and Funeral Masses with limited attendance; Sunday Masses with limited supervised attendance. Then, if all is well health-wise, full Mass schedules and Sacramental activities

It has been thirteen Sundays - since March 15 - that we have not been able to have public Masses. This action was necessary to protect the health and safety of our parishioners and neighbors. Many prayers have been said for everyone affected, especially for those who care for the sick, and for those who have died. Among prayers printed in our weekly bulletins are these, and all are still needed:

***\* For the physical health and spiritual strength of those who work with and for the sick, that they may not lose heart, will stay healthy themselves, and will be appreciated for their efforts, we pray....***

***\* For the many people, both family and strangers, who have died as a result of this virus, that their faith in God, especially in the suffering, death, and resurrection of our Redeemer Jesus Christ, will lead them to eternal light and peace in the kingdom of heaven, let us pray to the Lord...***

***\* We are grateful, O Lord, for the fact that the number of SI admissions for Covid-19 has been decreasing. Help us to stay the course of safe practices, and allow us soon the graces and consolation of celebrating the Mass and receiving the Sacraments. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.***

On Thursday, May 21, Cardinal Dolan gave a press briefing in a Manhattan church, stressing that our Church is eager to resume public worship in a safe and responsible

manner in coordination with state and local government and health officials. He stated that worship is an essential service. To that end, he presented a plan for gradual opening which follows latest guidance from the CDC. I would like to highlight some important parts , and remind you that you can get announcements and Mass schedules very easily if you sign up on our website [www.saintteresasi.org](http://www.saintteresasi.org) for **Flocknote**.

## **General Principles From Our Archdiocesan Plan For Returning to Public Worship**

### ***A. Church Attendance.***

1. Those who are a higher risk for COVID-19 (i.e., those older than 65 or who have underlying health conditions) are urged *not* to come to church for Mass now. The obligation to attend Mass is suspended for them and for those who are ill or anxious about going out right now. Those who do not attend Mass are encouraged to watch a broadcast or live-streamed Mass, and to make an act of spiritual communion. {In fact, our parish will begin to live-stream Masses in June.} Sign up for **Flocknote** on our website [www.saintteresasi.org](http://www.saintteresasi.org) for new information and starting dates.

2. Those who feel in any way sick (e.g., oral temperature higher than 99.5°F, cough, chills, muscle aches, headache, sore throat, or new loss of taste or smell) should not enter the church.

3. In accord with current state policy, those over two years old must wear cloth face coverings when in public, including when they come to church. Bring your own. If you forget, we will have some. Please sanitize hands at the entrance of the church; we will have hand sanitizers available.

4. All except family members should sit six feet or more away from others. Due to the limited number of persons allowed in church at one time (approximately 25% of the permitted occupancy), attendance may be based on a first-come, first-served policy, Overflow will be invited to watch Mass downstairs, and Holy Communion will be brought to them.

5. A parish staff member or volunteer should be stationed at the front door when the church is open to ensure that no more than the permitted number of people are present inside the church, and that everyone is keeping social distancing guidelines - at least six feet apart in all directions, though families may be seated together. We will use tape to mark pews. All present at Mass should sit in marked places only. We will use the lower church hall for overflow seating.

### ***B. Preparing the Church***

1. Hand sanitizers should be placed near the entrances to the church. Face masks should be available to all who need them. Entrance doors may be propped open. Holy water and baptismal fonts should be emptied. Hymnals and missalettes must be removed. (Worship booklets/aids like MAGNIFICAT ([www.magnificat.org](http://www.magnificat.org)) or worship aids accessible on a smart phone may be used)
2. Where the faithful will stand in line (for example, when waiting to go to Confession or to receive Holy Communion), tape should be placed on the floor to indicate proper six foot spacing.
3. Doors, handles, pew tops, restrooms should be sanitized after each liturgy and regularly. The number of people who enter a restroom at the same time should be limited, and tape should be placed on the floor outside to indicate where people should stand in line to wait.
4. A parish staff member or volunteer should be stationed at the front door when the church is open to ensure that no more than the permitted number of people are present inside the church at one time and that everyone is seated according to social distancing guidelines.

## **II. Celebration of Mass.**

Only a limited number, such as 25% of capacity, will be permitted in church at one time. People arriving after that number is reached could be invited to watch Mass and receive Holy Communion, e.g., in a lower church. Pastors should bear in mind the canonical principle that priests should not celebrate Mass more than twice on a weekday or three times on Sundays and holy days of obligation (Canon 905).

1. A priest with a respiratory infection of any kind should not celebrate public Masses or administer sacraments. The same holds for other ministers who might serve at a Mass, as well as for sacristans, ushers, etc. Clergy and lay liturgical ministers should be tested for COVID-19 regularly, where this is possible. It is recommended that altar servers not be used at this time.
2. Priests, deacons, readers, and sacristans are to wash/sanitize their hands before and after Mass, and before and after the distribution of Communion.
3. The priest celebrant and other ministers should not generally wear masks or gloves during the celebration of Mass. But priests and other ministers of Holy Communion should wear a mask (but not gloves) during the distribution of Holy Communion.
4. The offertory procession with gifts of bread and wine, and the sign of peace, must be omitted.

Large choirs are not recommended at this time. A cantor and organ may be used. Familiar hymns should be preferred, as hymnals and missalettes must be removed from the pews. And all ministers should maintain a six foot distance from the priest and from each other.

#### ***D. Distribution of Holy Communion***

1. At the start or a suitable point during Mass, the priest should explain that given the frequency of direct contact with saliva when Holy Communion is received on the tongue, it is strongly recommended that people receive the host in open hands for the protection of all

2. Ministers should use hand sanitizers before and after giving Holy Communion, and wear masks. Holy Communion may not be distributed with gloves, nor may it be received in the hand if someone is wearing gloves. Those who wish to remain in their places may do so, and make an act of spiritual communion. People should maintain a six foot distance from each other as they come up for Holy Communion, and minimize the time when their mask is lowered.

#### ***E. Collection***

1. Special provision should be made for the collection. Baskets should not be passed from person to person. Long-handled baskets may be acceptable if the ushers can remain a suitable distance from others. Parishes may wish to set up central boxes or collection points where the faithful can place their contributions. Signage and announcements can encourage the use of **WeShare**. For information, go to our website [www.saintteresasi.org](http://www.saintteresasi.org), and look for the image of a little church.

2. No paper bulletins will be distributed. Instead, parish bulletins/news should be posted to the parish website or emailed to parishioners.