

# St. Wenceslaus Catholic Parish

*St. Wenceslaus, St. John, & St. Scholastica*

May 29, 2020

Dear Parishioners,

As we approach a limited re-opening of our church's sacred liturgies (and the reopening of our state) in accord with the agreement reached by the religious leaders of our state and our Governor, I first want to say THANK YOU! to everyone: my staff in the parish and school who have worked so hard to make necessary things happen in limited circumstances, you the parishioners who have stepped up and volunteered for calling, making masks, cleaning up our gardens, and especially for resuming your regular giving.

The reopening of our sacred liturgies has been named "Phase II" by our Archdiocese, and they have given us some specific directives on how we may accomplish this transition. These directives are guided by the recommendations from the CDC, health professionals, and others with the requisite expertise on how to accomplish the reopening in the safest way possible. I'm not going to reprint in this letter all the details in the directive (some items, such as directives for priests living in community will not affect our church), rather I will reprint what needs to be repeated and make individual comments on how we will implement the reopening for our three churches. First:

## General Principles

- A. Our first consideration must continue to be for the spiritual and physical health of our parishioners and those whom they encounter, especially the most vulnerable: the elderly and those with chronic illnesses. We continue to rely on medical professionals and governmental standards to inform these directives.
- B. **The Obligation to attend Sunday Mass and Holy Days of Obligation continues to be suspended as long as the pandemic continues. Anyone who is uncomfortable for any reason about coming to Mass is not obligated and we invite you to join us for Mass on the virtual Life Streams.**
- C. **All COVID-19 positive persons, those who are symptomatic, and those living with them must stay home.**
- D. Persons over age 65 and those with preexisting health conditions **should (and are strongly urged)** to continue staying at home during Phase II and avoid public gatherings, including church.
- E. We will continue to live stream the daily 8:00AM Rosary and Mass; Tuesday through Friday and 5:00PM Saturday and 10:30AM Sunday Masses; and possibly Rosaries as well for the benefit of the homebound and those otherwise vulnerable and unable to attend in person. After June 15, I will go back to taking Mondays as my day off during the week.
- F. The course of the Liturgical Year will be maintained with the primacy of Sunday being respected. If social distancing restrictions make attending Sunday Mass impossible or inadvisable, the faithful may consider attending Mass on a weekday with smaller crowds.

**St. Wenceslaus**

215 MAIN STREET EAST, NEW PRAGUE, MN 56071 ~ (952) 758-3225 PH (952) 758-2960 FAX

**St. John the Evangelist**

**St. Scholastica**

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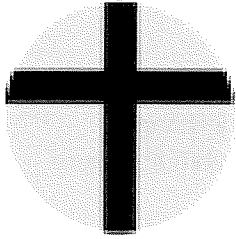
- G. All the faithful should continue to follow hygienic practices at home: wash hands often, avoid touching the face, cover coughs and sneezes, etc. It is also recommended to use the restroom at home before coming to church.

### Safety and Hygiene in our Churches/Buildings

- A. Weather permitting, we will prop doors open to minimize touch, open windows, and run the exhaust fan in our ceiling to maximize air circulation.
- B. To the best of our ability, we will have one entrance for use at each of our churches:
  - a. St. Wenceslaus – the entrance will be the West door by the elevators between the church and rectory.
  - b. St. John – there will be 2 entrances used; the main church doors and the North door for handicap accessibility.
  - c. St. Scholastica – the Handicap accessible door on the South side with the ramp will be the access door.
- C. There will be instructive signs and hand sanitizer at all entrances and ushers will be there to assist and help direct at our weekend liturgies.
- D. Our churches will be disinfected before and after each liturgy, especially pews, chairs, ambos, handrails, doorknobs, and push plates.
- E. Restroom facilities should be sanitized after each liturgy and at other regular intervals.
- F. Hymnals, missalettes, and other commonly held items (e.g. children's toys) will be removed and stored during the pandemic.
- G. Baptismal fonts and holy water stoups will remain empty.

### Social Distancing within the Church

- A. **During Phase II, the maximum number of persons admitted into a church building is limited to 25% of the total seating capacity.** That means our capacity for each church is:
  - a. St. Wenceslaus – 41 pews with a maximum of 175 people.
  - b. St. John – 12 pews with a maximum of 53 people.
  - c. St. Scholastica 10 pews with a maximum of 45 people.
- B. Each person must remain 6 feet away in all directions from others not in the same household. This also applies to chapels and other rooms on site. Depending on its layout, in some cases less than 25% of the church may be able to be occupied.
- C. We will rope off two of every three pews indicating where people may/may not sit. In order to have an orderly way for ensuring we do not go over the mandated limits for seating we will:
  - a. Use a combination of **Online Sign-Up** and calling the parish (if you do not have internet capability) to reserve a pew for the Sunday celebrations of Holy Mass.
  - b. Since we are only allowed 25% capacity, we ask that people only sign up once in any 3-week period to attend a Sunday Mass.
  - c. We ask that people sign up for the following week's Mass on the previous Monday through Friday Noon.
  - d. If **after Noon on Friday** there are any open slots on the **Online Sign-Up**, those who have been to a Mass in the last 2 weeks may sign up on a first come first served basis for those open slots.
- H. Face masks are **strongly urged** for all assembly members (but not for those under age two, according to the CDC, since it may put them at risk of suffocation).



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- I. The Cry Room area is closed and will not be used. It is difficult to keep children within social distancing guidelines and items are difficult to keep sanitized.
- J. There will be no Children's Liturgy of the Word.
- K. **Distributing Holy Communion** is a delicate topic. We will ensure reverence for the Blessed Sacrament yet retain social distance. The Archdiocese consulted theologians and medical professionals and concluded that **distribution of Communion after Mass** would pose less health risk because it allows for greater social distancing. Therefore:
  - a. When the number of communicants is more than 10, Communion will be distributed during Mass only to those few ministers in the sanctuary. The remaining faithful will be offered Communion after the Final Blessing of the Mass. The faithful may leave at their own pace, before or after distribution of Communion (after the Final Blessing) but they may be asked to depart in a reasonable amount of time so pews can be sanitized before the next liturgy.
  - b. Communion will not be offered under the species of the Precious Blood for the foreseeable future. If someone is Gluten intolerant, please contact Fr. Theisen for possible options.
  - c. When the number of communicants is less than 10, Communion will be distributed within Mass, always maintaining proper social distancing.
  - d. The faithful apply hand sanitizer before approaching the Communion station. If you are able, please consider bringing a small bottle with you so you can sanitize your hands in your pew or early in the Communion line and give time for the sanitizer to dry (the feedback we have received is that the sanitizer residue on the hands does not taste very good).
  - e. The faithful are recommended to receive Communion in the hand and extend hands as much as possible to keep distance. Also, keep hands low enough for the Communion distributor to easily place the host on the hand without making hand-to-hand-contact.
  - f. Wearing gloves to distribute Communion is unbecoming of the Blessed Sacrament and is not to be done, nor is using tongs or other instruments; in any case these are just as likely as hands to transmit infections. Nor may the faithful wear gloves when receiving Communion in the hand, nor receive it in a paper tissue, plate, cup, or other disposable item. Communion hosts may not be distributed in zip-lock baggies, plastic cups, pre-packaged containers, or any other unapproved vessels.
  - g. Those unable to receive Communion in the hand must discuss the matter with Father Theisen personally for possible alternatives.
- L. Gatherings on church grounds before or after Mass are not allowed during Phase II.

## Music Ministry

- A. Congregational singing is temporarily discontinued, since singing expels many more respiratory particles than speaking does.
- B. We will use soloists and/or instrumental music or have Mass without music (e.g. weekdays).
- C. Choirs are discontinued until it is safe to resume since adherence to social distancing in the choir area isn't feasible.

**St. Wenceslaus**

**St. John the Evangelist**

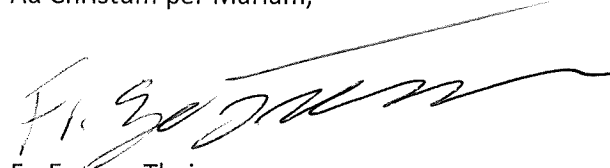
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As I have said in Mass, please be patient with us. If you are frustrated with the many changes, requirements, and policies, know that you are not alone. We are working hard as a staff to ensure safety, compliance, and worship are maintained.

Ad Christum per Mariam,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Fr. Eugene Theisen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Fr. Eugene Theisen  
Parochial Administrator  
Saint Wenceslaus Catholic Parish