

Church of the Assumption

34 James Street
Keyser, WV 26726
304-788-2488

www.assumptionkeyserwv.org

May 15, 2020

My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As you know, we will begin the public celebration of Holy Mass at our church next weekend, May 23-24. While we certainly look forward to this with great anticipation, we must also follow the very carefully developed directives from our Diocese designed to protect all our loved ones and neighbors.

I ask that you read the guidelines that follow very closely, and please understand that our failure to comply with these guidelines could result in us no longer being able to celebrate Mass under this temporary operating arrangement.

Please remember that the faithful of our diocese are still dispensed from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass until further notice. If you are sick, you should stay at home. If you are over the age of 65, have existing health conditions, or if you are fearful about attending Mass because of the spread of disease, we encourage you to stay safe at home.

Additional guidelines for how we will reopen safely and what you can expect if you choose to attend Mass are below.

Masks or Face Coverings Required

Anyone attending Mass or in the church for any reason **must wear a mask/face covering** which covers the nose and mouth. This is for your protection as well as those around you. We ask that you bring a mask from home, but a limited supply of disposable masks will be available at the church.

Mass Schedule

Our Mass schedule will remain the same as what it was before the closure of the church:

Saturday – 4 p.m.

Sunday – 8:30 a.m.

Wednesday – 6 p.m.

Thursday – 12 noon

Friday – 9 a.m.

Reduced Seating for Social Distancing

Seating capacity of the church will be very limited with seating in every other pew only and social distancing between attendees. Families will be able to sit together (as long as space is available).

Pre-Registration for Mass Attendance Required

To manage the reduced seating capacity and avoid having to turn away parishioners because the church is full, we have implemented a pre-registration process.

You can pre-register by emailing or phoning Kelli Wittman at the Parish Office. Be prepared to provide which day you want to attend Mass and how many people will be attending with you. All efforts will be made to seat family members together, but unfortunately you will not be able to choose where in the church you sit. Reservations will be made on a first come, first served basis, and at this time each parishioner/family can only make one reservation per week.

We will be able to accommodate only 20-25% of our normal Saturday/Sunday attendance, so please consider attending one of the weekday Masses if you're able to do so. Perhaps if you attend on a weekend one week, attend on a weekday the next week to give others an opportunity to attend Sunday Mass.

How to Pre-Register

Email (acckwv@gmail.com) or phone 304.788.2488 beginning on Mondays to register for a Mass for the following week. For example, reservations will be taken beginning Monday, May 18, for Masses on Saturday, May 23, through Friday, May 29.

If you make a reservation and then find that you will not be able to keep it, kindly cancel with Kelli to open up a spot for another person.

Additionally, please arrive at church at least 5 minutes prior to the start of Mass.

Keep in mind that this process is new for all of us. If we find that we have fewer people attending Mass than anticipated, we will make changes to these attendance guidelines.

Guests from Nearby Parishes

At this time registration will be open to members of Assumption parish only. If we see that space is available, we will gladly welcome our fellow Catholics from nearby parishes.

Office Hours

The Parish Office hours will return to normal beginning the week of May 18: Monday through Thursday, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Even though the office is open, we ask that you keep social distancing guidelines in mind and conduct any business that can be done by email or phone in that way if possible. Masks will be required inside the office.

Upon Arrival at the Church

The church will be opened 30 minutes before the scheduled Mass time. If you arrive more than 30 minutes ahead, please remain in your vehicle since there can be no congregating in front of the church or in the parking lots. We realize that some people will be entering the church at the same time; there will be markings on the sidewalk toward St. Mary's Hall to ensure the appropriate six-foot social distancing.

When you enter the church, an usher will seat you according to a seating chart developed from the pre-registration process.

What to Expect Inside the Church

- All Holy Water fonts will be empty.
- Hand sanitizer will be available for you to use as you enter and exit the church.
- The Missalettes and other worship aids will have been removed from the pews. Handouts with the Sunday readings and Responsorial Psalm will be available on a table as you enter the church. If you take one, please take it with you when you leave and dispose of it. (If you have a copy of *The Word Among Us* book, you're welcome to bring that each week.)

Limited Liturgical Ministries

Ministries will be limited to the following:

- One lector per Mass
- One organist
- One cantor (located in the choir loft)
- Two-Three Ushers
 - We need parishioners to volunteer as ushers. Please contact the Parish Office to be added to the list. Nancy Starcher will be the coordinator of ushers; she will provide more details to you. Ushers should be adults only please.

There will be no altar servers, Extraordinary Ministers, or choir.

Presentation of the gifts by parishioners will not take place.

A Note to Lectors

You will be receiving a Lector schedule from Doug Minnich (4 p.m.) or Pam Williams (8:30 a.m.). If you will not be able to fulfill your scheduled time, kindly find a replacement. Or if you would prefer to not be included on the schedule, please contact either Doug or Pam.

We will use a volunteer system for lectors at the weekday Masses. If you can fill that role on a weekday, please let Kelli know when you register for Mass.

Offertory Collection

The collection will not be taken up during Mass. A basket will be located on the table when you enter the church; please drop your offertory donation in it upon entering. Alternately, you can continue to mail or drop your envelopes in the office mailbox.

Other Changes to the Mass

- Please do not hold hands with non-family members during the Lord's Prayer.
- The Sign of Peace will be omitted.

Distribution of Holy Communion

- A single line will form in the middle of the center aisle (abide by the six-foot markings on the floor to maintain social distancing).
- Each side of the pews on each side of the church from back to front will be invited to proceed to Communion by an Usher (those on the window side of the pew on the left first, followed by those on the aisle side of the pew on the left; then the window side of the pew on the right, followed by the aisle side of the pew on the right).
- Communion may not be received with gloves.
- You may receive Communion in the hand or on the tongue, but medical opinion is that it is safer to receive it in the hand.
 - If taking Communion by hand, stop at arm's length from me (observing the marking on the floor). Extend your arms and open your hand fully. Keep your mask on until you step away, then lower your mask to consume the Host.
 - If taking Communion on the tongue, lower your mask, extend your tongue fully to take the Host, move to the side, and raise your mask. (I will sanitize my hands after each person who receives Communion on the tongue.)
- Return to your pew via the side aisle.
- The Precious Blood will not be distributed.

Exiting the Church

Ushers will dismiss attendees by pew, beginning with those closest to the exit.

Sanitization of the Church – Volunteers Needed!

Pews and other commonly touched surfaces in the church will be sanitized following each Mass; we need volunteers to accomplish this.

Please contact the Parish Office if you will be able to help in this ministry. Jane Placka will be the coordinator of cleaners and she will provide more details to you. Cleaners should be adults only please.

Use of the Restroom

The restroom will be open during Mass, but please sanitize all surfaces after use with the cleaning wipes supplied. Parents please note: you must accompany your children to the restroom.

Confessions

Confessions will be heard on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays by appointment only. Please contact the Parish Office to schedule. Please note that you will be required to wear a mask.

Funerals

Funeral Masses may be held in accordance with the same limitations and guidelines for normal Masses. Bereavement lunches may not be held.

Dates for First Communion and Senior Graduation

Our senior CCD graduates will be recognized at Sunday Mass on June 7. We are still determining the appropriate timing for our First Communion candidates to receive their Sacraments and will communicate that date as soon as possible.

No Social Gatherings

No social gatherings or meetings can be held until further notice.

Poor Box Available

The poor box in the church will be available as normal for your donations. The beneficiary in May and June will be the Faith In Action Food Pantry.

As a reminder, if you are able to volunteer as an usher, a cleaner, or both, please contact the Parish Office. We must have an adequate number of people available to fill these roles or we will not be able to have Mass.

My thanks to you for your patience and understanding during these initial weeks as we all adapt to these new directives.

With my continued prayers for your good health,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Fr. Thomas A. Sebastian", with a horizontal line underneath.

Fr. Thomas A. Sebastian
Administrator