



St. Anthony Catholic Church

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May 15, 2020

Dear Brothers & Sisters,

As you may have heard, Bishop Bellisario in consultation with our priests and medical experts has developed and implemented a plan to gradually reopen parishes and services in phases. There are two initial phases that reflect, and in some cases exceed the current local and state public health mandates and guidance to prevent the spread of COVID-19:

Phase I (Upon Bishop Bellisario's approval of the mitigation plan, parts of **Phase I** may begin May 15.)

1. The possibility of the partial opening of churches for private prayer and devotion, including Eucharistic Adoration.
2. The possibility of the availability of funerals and weddings.

Phase II (Upon Bishop Bellisario's approval of our mitigation plan, parts of **Phase II** may begin May 22.)

1. The possibility of Masses with the distribution of Holy Communion in the Church.
2. The possibility of parking lot Masses with the distribution of Holy Communion.

Per municipal requirements, parishes have been asked to establish COVID-19 mitigation plans for each phase unique to their own circumstances. At a minimum, the mitigation plan must contain protocols to minimize direct contact between employees and parishioners, increase physical distancing, and ensure proper sanitation during and between gatherings to protect you and our staff.

The decision on when and if to reopen our Parish for each respective phase is at the discretion of Fr. Vince, as long as the mitigation plan has been approved by the Archdiocese. At this point, our Parish has an approved mitigation plan for Phase I and is in the process of developing a mitigation plan for Phase II. **However, Fr. Vince and I determined that this is not an appropriate time to reopen our Parish for two main reasons.**

1. Construction will begin in the sanctuary during the week of May 18 to demo and reinstall the limestone brick wall behind the altar that was weakened during the November 30, 2018 earthquake.
2. We are unable to secure the necessary PPE, disinfectants, and sanitation equipment as well as train the required personnel and volunteers that is specified in our Phase I mitigation plan.

Since the November 30, 2018 earthquake, our staff has been working with a structural engineer to determine the best course of action for a long term stabilization of the limestone brick wall behind the altar. It was determined at the end of last year that the most appropriate decision was to demo and reinstall the wall with structural upgrades so that it would be less prone to seismic activity. The Parish obtained the necessary funding for this project this past January, and unfortunately, the scheduling for the project was delayed due to the pandemic. We believe now is the most opportune time to start construction as the Parish is already limited in its ability to fully reopen. According to the general contractor, the project will likely be completed by late May to early June.

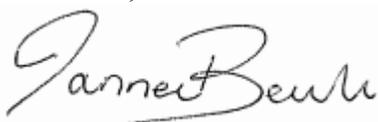
In regard to securing the necessary supplies, we have ordered PPE, disinfectants, and equipment to help combat the spread of the virus within our facilities. A majority of the supplies will be arriving in the next couple of weeks, while an important piece of sanitation equipment will not likely arrive until the end of June as it is backordered. In the meantime, we are soliciting for non-vulnerable parishioners to join a new ministry that we will be forming called the COVID-19 Safety Ministry. This ministry will be at the center of our reopening and mitigation plans. Once our Parish begins to reopen, these ministers will be responsible for screening parishioners prior to allowing them to enter into the facility and ensuring everyone is adhering to the mitigation plan. If you are a non-vulnerable adult and are interested in serving in this new and critically important ministry, please contact the office for details.

On a separate note, the realities of this pandemic have and will continue to take a financial toll on our Parish. The Parish's draft 2021 budget has been developed with this in mind. As a matter of good stewardship, the Archdiocese has requested that all Parishes cut their budgets by at least 25%. This will inevitably affect our ability to invest in certain programs and services. Our parish has been operating on a rather lean budget for years, and there are not many non-essential expenses. Regrettably, we must reduce essential expenses in a short amount of time to comply with this mandate. The structure of our Parish will drastically change in the ensuing months to maintain sustainability as a result. More information will be provided in the next several weeks as the draft budget is reviewed by the Archdiocesan Finance Council and Bishop Bellisario.

We would also like to remind you that the obligation to attend Sunday Mass and Holy Days continues to be suspended. Moreover, the current availability of the sacraments of Confession and Anointing of the Sick remains- please contact the office if you are interested. Once we do begin the process of gradually reopening, we will inform you of the details of our mitigation plans. When that time does come, I encourage those that are over the age of 65, and those who have an underlying health conditions to please remain home to ensure your safety.

We appreciate your patience and understanding and ask that you please continue to pray for our Parish as we navigate through these trying times.

God Bless,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Tanner Berube". The signature is written in dark ink on a light-colored background.

Tanner Berube
Business Manager