

To the Parishioners of Sacred Heart Parish

October 5, 2020

Dear Parishioners of Sacred Heart Parish:

It is with great pleasure and gratitude to God Almighty, that we can enter into Phase Two of the Re-Opening of our parish. We do so cautiously always keeping in mind the possibility of having to slow down or even perhaps close down once again should a serious spike in the Covid-19 virus reoccur.

The following are the new protocols which will be implemented beginning the weekend of October 10-11, 2020.

Sunday Obligation Suspended:

Sunday Masses will be celebrated Saturday & Sunday as well as the weekday Masses at the times given below. **Note: The Sunday obligation is suspended indefinitely for all persons living or visiting the Diocese of Tucson.** If one is unable to come to one of the Masses for health reasons, please note: Sunday Mass may be viewed on the diocesan website as well as EWTN or other catholic internet offerings.

Vulnerable Categories

Those parishioners 65 years and older are strongly urged to consider refraining from attending Mass in person. This applies most especially to those who also have other health issues (Cancer, Chronic kidney disease, COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease), Immunocompromised state (weakened immune system) from solid organ transplant, Obesity, (body mass index [BMI] of 30 or higher), Serious heart conditions, such as heart failure, coronary artery disease, or cardiomyopathies, Sickle cell disease, and Type 2 diabetes mellitus, (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-with-medical-conditions.html>).

Vulnerable adults and those 65 or older who have health conditions and those taking care of them should continue to stay home. Those people who are ill in any way are urged, in the strictest sense, to remain at home and not to come onto parish property

Risk

There is an inherent risk, regardless of age or health, in attending any public event. This includes religious services. While we are working to reduce the risk, there are no risk-free situations. Your presence at a public event constitutes your understanding and acceptance of this essential level of risk. The wearing of masks is mandatory for all age six and older.

Masks

The use of face masks for all those age six and older is mandatory. The clergy may not shake hands or make any other physical contact with parishioners in this phase. Anyone with a legitimate medical reason not to use a mask is to clarify this matter with the pastor prior to presenting himself/herself for public liturgy. Depending on the size of the parish church, and as masks primarily protect the vulnerable in our communities, those persons without masks might be asked to be seated in a more distanced space from the majority of the community at Mass

Sunday and Weekday Mass Schedule

Sacred Heart Church in Nogales has a seating capacity of 600 people, our regular Sunday Mass has an average participation of 145 parishioners with the Spanish Masses having the most participation with an average of between 180 and 200 people. We feel that the proposed Saturday & Sunday and weekday schedule we will be able serve our parish community with the following schedule:

Sunday Masses

Saturday	5:15 p.m. - English
Sunday	6:30 a.m. - Spanish
Sunday	9:00 a.m. - Spanish
Sunday	10:30 a.m. - English
Sunday	12:00 noon - English
Sunday	5:15 p.m. - Spanish

Weekday Masses

Monday through Friday	Monday through Saturday
6:30 a.m. - Spanish	6:30 a.m. - Spanish
12:10 p.m. - English	
5:15 p.m. - Spanish	

Church Capacity

Only 1/3 of our capacity will be seated per Mass, this will allow us the strict adherence to physical distancing protocols. These means that only 200 persons per Mass will be allowed. If the church reaches that capacity you may have to return at another Mass time. If you see the following sign :**“Church is Full” sign and “Our next Mass will be at _____”**, please be prepared to return at a later Mass

Changes in our Liturgical Practice

For the present, there will be no congregational singing or use of hymnals during Mass. No holding hands during the ‘Our Father’. No human touching during the ‘Sign of Peace’. The Holy Eucharist will be distributed at the normal time during Mass and will be received in the hand only. Parishioners are asked to cup their hands so that the Eucharist may be gently dropped into their hands avoiding physical contact.

Ushers who have been instructed on protocols, will ensure physical distancing guidelines are followed and will be monitoring the entry/exit points.

During this phase we are still unable to make use of the Holy Water fonts.

Sacrament of Penance

Sacramental Penance will continue to be celebrated outdoors on the north side of the Church. Masks will be used by Celebrant and Penitent and physical distance protocols will be observed.

Eucharistic Adoration

During Phase Two, our time of Eucharistic Adoration will have to be modified. We will only be allowed to expose the Blessed Sacrament every Friday for an hour after the 6:30 a.m. daily Mass and concluding with Benediction at 8:00 a.m. We will then expose the Blessed Sacrament at 4:00 p.m. and conclude with

Benediction at 5:00 p.m. The use of masks continues to be mandatory and parishioners are encouraged to stay in their place for the entire hour.

24-Hour Eucharistic Adoration Suspended. While we continue in Phase Two, we will not be able to have 24-Hour Eucharistic Adoration on the First Friday of the month.

Sanitation and Cleaning

You are encouraged to use hand sanitizer and the washing of hands before Mass and when you arrive home.

The proposed Mass Schedule allows us enough time to sanitize frequently touched surfaces between Masses by trained volunteers. The volunteers will use Clorox diluted with water to spray and wipe clean the front of the pews where most people touch the surface. The evaporative coolers will be in use to push any contaminated air out, the main doors of the church are always to remain open.

Parish Bulletins

Parish bulletins will be available after each Mass on Sunday for self-pick up at the main doors of the church. Extra bulletins will be removed between Masses.

Other Liturgies

Masses for Weddings, Funerals and Quinceañeras will follow the same protocols as Sunday Masses, especially as it pertains to maximum seating in the Church, music, etc.

Baptisms: The celebration of baptisms will be limited to twenty (20) persons. Critical to the celebration of a baptism during this phase is physical distancing during the celebration. It has been observed repeatedly that celebrations involving persons well known to one another (families at weddings, baptisms, first-communions, etc.) are occasions with a far greater chance of a breakdown in physical distancing, etc. The celebrant of Baptism should instruct the family ahead of time as to the importance of physical distancing.

Quinceañeras: Quinceañeras will follow the same protocols as Sunday Masses. Public celebratory gatherings before or after the celebration at the entrance of the Church or on the Church grounds will not be permitted.

Group Meetings and Other Activities

Parish Meetings: Parish meetings ordinarily are to be held through technology. By exception, they may resume in-person but only when participants are outside the “at risk” category of the CDC and the participants freely agree to participate. Those who cannot participate in an in-person meeting the parish group leaders should provide the opportunity to participate through technology. All in-person meetings must follow physical distancing protocols and the use of masks. Meeting rooms shall be cleaned and disinfected after use and between meetings. If these points cannot be met, then the meetings must take place via technology.

Fund Raising: Fund-raising endeavors, including raffles will need to be assessed on a case-by-case basis. The critical issues will be the extent to which safety protocols can be applied. Fund-raising efforts involving

food will probably not be permitted in this phase. Too, they would have to be cleared by a county health department before approaching the Diocese.

We continue to pray for an end to the Covid-19 virus in our world, pleading with the Lord to deliver us. We should also offer our prayers of thanksgiving to Almighty God for the guidance He has given to the doctors, scientists, researchers, etc., to develop an effective treatment protocol for the sick and that an effective and safe vaccine may soon be available. Above all this, we should thank the Lord that we are able to return to the public celebration of the daily Mass once again and very soon return to the “normal” practice of our Faith.

I am truly grateful to all the parishioners and friends of Sacred Heart Parish who have continued to support financially the parish during these months. Your commitment and sacrifice are truly appreciated and you are in my prayers daily. May God multiply His blessings among you.

In Christ,

Fr. Velásquez