

June 14, 2020 – Feast of Corpus Christi

Dear Parishioners of St. Lawrence O'Toole,

I pray that you and your loved ones are safe and healthy during this most challenging time. Know that you have been close in prayer during daily Mass. We also pray for the sick, those who have been called home to the Lord and our front-line health care and essential workers.

You may have heard that soon we will be able to re-open our churches once again. We are thankful as this time of closure has been painful and difficult. As we implement our re-opening plans, we must do so with prudence and caution, ensuring that we do everything possible to reduce the potential transmission of the virus.

As you can expect, things will look a little different when we return to church. For that reason, I'm including a few documents to help us understand what things will look like. Yes, these are uncomfortable practices and they may seem overly restrictive - I understand that. However, to keep everyone as safe as possible, we must all do our part and make the best of this challenging situation.

One of the biggest challenges is that, to re-open, we must do so in phases where our capacity (# of people who can attend church) will be limited due to directives from the Province's medical experts. Please refer to the attached document on how our parish will do our best to tackle this issue. The document also includes our current schedule and office hours.

I am also attaching a "guidelines" document to give you a better sense of what you can expect and how you can help out before you arrive at church, when you arrive and at points in between. We'll offer reminders/signs when you are here but it's good to review these guidelines at this time.

One key point that I would like to highlight is that the diocese, after consulting with the Chief Medical Officer for the Province, is asking that all those (over the age of 3) who come to church wear a mask/face covering to mitigate the potential spread of the virus. While not mandatory, they are highly recommended. Again, I recognize this is uncomfortable but it is out of care and love for our neighbour. Please follow this direction and bring a mask/face covering with you when you return to church.

Finally, I invite you to consider how you might share your time and talents as a volunteer. The many tasks required for re-opening are significant and we need more volunteers than ever to help. If you'd like to volunteer, please contact (PROVIDE EMAIL/PHONE contact).

Our joy of re-opening churches is measured with the restrictions that will be required. However, returning to sacramental life and gathering as a community is sustenance essential for our faith community during these trying days.

I look forward to welcoming you back soon – be assured that you remain in my prayers each day.

Sincerely in Christ,

Reverend Patrick M. Dobec, P.P.

Guidelines for Returning to Church – Resource for the Faithful

As we re-open churches, please be aware of the following guidelines. We recognize that they may be awkward/uncomfortable and contrary to our culture of hospitality and community. In working to foster a safe environment for all, we thank you in advance for your patience and co-operation.

Before coming to church:

- Please check temperature of all family members before coming to church. If any family members have a fever, please remain home for the health and safety of all. Consult your family doctor.
- If you exhibit any of the following symptoms, please remain home at this time - cough, fatigue, loss of appetite, shortness of breath, muscle aches, loss of taste or smell, headache, runny nose, sore throat, chills with shakes.

Arriving at church

- Maintain physical distancing at all times – 2 metres (6 feet) from others – in the parking lot, church entrance and in church itself.
- Upon arrival, put on mask/face covering before entering church (for all those over the age of 3)
- Parishes will likely be using one entrance only – it may not be the entrance you are familiar with. Follow direction of volunteers, signage as appropriate.
- Sanitize hands upon entry and regularly wherever possible.
- Pews and aisles will be marked to note physical distancing requirements. Families and households living at the same residence may sit together; the same 2 metre (6 ft.) distance should be maintained concerning others. Follow direction of ushers for seating.
- Pews will be emptied of prayer books, hymnals, etc. Parish bulletins will not be published at this time.
- Holy Water fonts will be empty and not in use at this time.
- If your church hall is used for overflow purposes, it will also be marked for physical distancing – same guidelines apply.

Celebration of the Eucharist

- Please listen carefully to announcements before the start of Mass. Follow direction as advised.
- Altar servers, lectors will be kept to an absolute minimum during this period of time. Please do not enter the sacristy unless you have been asked to assist during Mass.
- Other than a cantor appropriately physically distanced, there will be no singing at Mass until further notice.

- There will be no offertory procession or collection. Please leave donation in the designated basket upon entry/departure as directed.
- We ask that people do not hold hands or shake hands during any portion of the celebration of the Eucharist.
- Masks/face coverings should be removed prior to reception of Holy Communion and put back on after consumption.
- During this time of pandemic and under the guidance of local medical health officials, the faithful are asked to receive Holy Communion in the hand by placing one on top of the other, allowing the Eucharistic Minister to safely place the Body of Christ in one's hand without contact.
- Follow direction of ushers for Communion flow ensuring physical distancing at all times
- Follow direction provided for dismissal and departure – exits may be different than those you are accustomed to.
- Following Mass, please depart the church so that cleaning may commence. While it is our nature to congregate/socialize in the foyer or parking lot, we ask you NOT to do so at this time. Please maintain physical distancing.

General

- If you suddenly feel ill, start coughing or sneezing, please leave the church for the health and safety of others gathered.
- Children's ministry, prayer groups and other ministries that gather in the church/church grounds are either suspended or operating virtually only at this time.
- Please use washrooms only if absolutely necessary. One person or family at a time should be in the washroom. Ensure that all wash their hands with warm, soapy water after using washroom facilities. Please respect physical distancing outside the washroom.
- If, within 14 days of attending Mass, you learn that you or someone in your family who attended Mass with you has tested positive for COVID-19, you are asked to: a) contact the Public Health Authority; and, b) contact the parish office. Your identity will not be revealed to anyone other than the Public Health Authority, and only to ensure that any spread is contained
- If you would like to volunteer to help at the parish, please contact the parish office. Separate guidance will be provided to lectors ushers, Eucharistic Ministers, etc.