June 3, 2020

Friends in Christ,

Blessings and prayers to you at this most challenging time in our Church and in our world. I am writing to you because you often attend Sunday Mass at the Chapel of the Immaculate Conception at the University of Dayton. As you are likely aware, the Archbishop has asked parishes to resume “public” Masses as soon as they are able. We are actively working on plans that return our community to worship, while doing our best to provide the safest environment possible to protect you, our volunteers, and our employees.

Some of us, often for reasons beyond our control, will not yet be able to return to the celebration of the Eucharist. Know that you are a critical part of our community and your absence at the table will be felt. All of the faithful worshipping in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati have received a dispensation from their Sunday obligation for the foreseeable future, so attendance at any Mass is voluntary on any day of the week.

We remind you that there is much that is unknown about the spread of COVID19, and that indoor gatherings, including church services pose a risk of community spread. We ask that if you or anyone in your household shows any sign of illness or fever or if you have any health vulnerabilities, that you refrain from attending public Mass.

A core tenet of the University of Dayton is that we are a University for the common good. Matters of public health, such as the Covid-19 pandemic, present challenges for everyone and will only be overcome when a society works together to protect the health and safety of the vulnerable. Public health (which differs from individual health) exists for the common good. With a disease such as Covid, we are all vulnerable to some extent. Out of love for our neighbor, there are outward expressions of safety and solidarity that we are asked to make.

With this in mind, and for the protection and safety of all, we will resume limited public Masses on Sunday June 14 at 10am. There will be no 6pm Sunday Mass this summer. Weekday Mass will resume in mid-August. We will be adopting these procedures when we resume limited public Masses on June 14th:

Chapel capacity: We are excited to return to the Sacrament of the Eucharist and experience the presence of Christ in the liturgy. One way we do this is through the gathered community. For a while, our community will feel small. For the month of June we will begin with a maximum capacity of 30 people, including the ministers. This is smaller than the maximum capacity of the chapel (about 60), even with social distancing, but it is critical that we have a few weeks for a “soft opening” in order to try out some procedures while keeping everyone safe. Once we reach our capacity in these weeks, you may be asked to make alternate worship plans, which could include: participating in Mass from the courtyard with a listening assist device or watching via livestream while making a spiritual communion.

Arrival and Seating: Please approach via the main plaza and enter through the large center doorway. 6ft spaces will be clearly marked on the sidewalk so that an appropriate distance can
be maintained between households. After entering the chapel doors, please sanitize your hands and wait for someone to seat you. You may need to wait outside the chapel for a few moments, so consider the weather when you arrive.

**Face coverings:** The University has adopted the CDC recommendation that all who are physically able and over the age of two wear a face covering. If at all possible, please bring your own. There will be a limited supply of single use non-medical masks available at the chapel doors should you forget yours as we all get used to our new routines. **The covering should be worn throughout the liturgy to protect others from the microdroplets that are expelled from your mouth and nose during normal breathing and speaking.**

**Liturgy Adaptations to Expect**
There will be some noticeable adaptations to the way we celebrate the liturgy when we return.

**Singing:** Some studies have shown that singing is a “superspreading” activity, and out of an abundance of caution, we will not have any congregational singing. Participation in the liturgy is still our right and responsibility by virtue of baptism, but we have judged that this must be balanced with care for neighbor and public health. There will be instrumental music and a musician who will sing some parts of the liturgy.

**Pace of the Mass:** Mass will move with a “reverent expedience.” Processions, movements, and pacing may move a little faster than is our norm to reduce the amount of time spent in a crowd.

**Sign of Peace and physical contact:** We ask that you do not touch others outside of your household and exchange peace with your brothers and sisters in faith by some means of non-contact communication, such as a bow, wave, or nod.

**Communion:** Grace comes to us through Sacramental signs, which are perceptible things that become extraordinary in their ability to become expressions of God’s love for us. In the Mass, this is most obvious in the Eucharist. For the time being, there will be noticeable changes to our procedures for communion.

- We will move single-file, one side of the church at a time keeping six feet (~3 pews) between people in line.
- Hand sanitizer is available after you leave your pew before you receive communion. You may either leave your face covering in your pew, or remove it immediately before receiving the Eucharist.
- Please receive communion in the hand only - for the safety of the priest and all who receive communion after you.
- The priest will present the Precious Body to you while you are still distanced, and after your “Amen”, please step forward to receive it, but then step to the side to consume it.

**Dismissal:** After the liturgy has ended, we will dismiss by row, starting at the back. You may exit using either the center or side aisle, but maintain distance as you do so and avoid congregating
in the plaza or courtyards to avoid a backlog. Once everyone has exited the building, those who choose to converse with other community members should ideally wear face coverings and maintain at least 2 arms of distance between households.

The faithful within the archdiocese have an indefinite dispensation from attending Sunday Mass, and so we ask that if you plan to return to Mass, that you continue to make room for others by either occasionally attending or utilizing weekday Masses, such as those offered at Holy Angels. Campus Ministry will also begin live streaming Mass every Sunday on our YouTube Channel. Links will be e-mailed to known contacts and eventually pushed on the UD Campus Ministry social media accounts. If you don’t already, you should like us on Facebook or follow us on Twitter or Instagram.

There is no playbook for how Mass should run in a pandemic. We have spent many, many hours considering the best guidance, liturgical practice, and the needs of our own space/community. We are certain there will be hiccups along the way, and we continue to refine this plan as we experience it. For now, as best as we are able, we look forward to gathering once again as the Body of Christ and experiencing the Joy of the Gospel communally.

I would be pleased to respond to your questions if you have them. Let us all pray for safety and health for all at this time. And for an end to this pandemic.

Peace and prayers,

Crystal and the CM Liturgy Team

Additional Mass times at Holy Angels:
Tuesday and Thursday at 7pm;
Wednesday and Friday at 12 noon;
Saturday at 5pm (Sunday vigil);
Sunday 10am.