



St. Joseph on the Brandywine  
10 Old Church Road  
Wilmington, DE 19807-3096

May 29, 2020

Dear Members & Friends of our Faith Community:

On Wednesday, May 20<sup>th</sup>, the Bishop announced the Guidelines for the Diocese of Wilmington to proceed with the opening of the churches in conforming to the rules of two states, Delaware and Maryland, whose counties make up the Diocese. [Please refer to the Diocese of Wilmington website www.cdow.org/Coronavirus \(Together in Christ – Responding to Coronavirus\).](http://www.cdow.org/Coronavirus)

In this letter to you, I am applying the guidelines given to St. Joseph on the Brandywine Church. It should be noted that our church, with seating for 320 is the smallest of the other churches in the Brandywine Deanery whose seating averages 600-800 per church. While seating is limited to one third of the Fire Marshal's number, that comes to 60 allowing for the six feet distancing between people although members of the same household can sit together.

It can be noted that when Bishop Malooly removed the obligation to attend Mass back in March before the lock down, attendance at the four Sunday Masses was 50, 44, 24, 52 (total 170). With multiple Masses on any day, we will have a problem with sanitizing the church after each Mass and Sunday. Even weekdays we anticipate an increase in Memorial Masses for people buried during the Coronavirus pandemic or cremated with urns held until they can be buried after celebration of the Mass when it is allowed. We also have the problem, as other businesses and nursing homes, in getting the protection equipment needed to sanitize even if volunteers come forth to help us do this. Please call the rectory if you would like to volunteer to help as an usher, attendant and/or sanitation volunteer.

After studying the matter and consultation with personnel, medical professionals and liturgical ministers, Fr. Evers and I as your Pastor, have decided on the following for **your safety and ours for the month of June:**

- ***On Sunday, June 7th, one Mass will be celebrated in the Family Center and Church at 10:30.*** Attendance will be limited (first come first served) in both the Church and Family Center until capacity is reached.
- ***Confessions will be held Saturday, June 6<sup>th</sup> at 8:30 – 9:30 in the Family Center and continue through the month of June.*** (The Vatican has dropped the Easter Duty requirement for 2020). Both daily Mass of 7 a.m. and 12:05 p.m. are suspended until further notice. Mass intentions assigned to the days in June will be celebrated by the priests in a private Mass as has been the case until now.

- Mass will still be celebrated and recorded privately on Saturday, with your parish priests and Michael Marinelli. Fr. Evers con-celebrates with me and serves as producer, director with an iPhone recording the event. This is posted to the parish site usually by Saturday night for viewing the next day for the convenience of the elderly, shut-ins or for those who choose not to come for health and safety reasons.
- Moreover, there is now no obligation to attend and parishioners who are particularly vulnerable (e.g. over the age of 60, existing or lung conditions, diabetes, or otherwise immunocompromised) are **STRONGLY ENCOURAGED**, for their own health, to avoid the risk of attending public celebrations of the church until all restrictions have been lifted.
- Individuals are the primary protectors of their own health and assure the risk of contracting the virus when going into public or a church.
- Pew and/or chair seating will be separated and marked off in accordance with the 6 feet distancing with seating as “individual or family”. Please do not remove the pew markers.
- Hymn books have been removed in addition to other reading materials in the vestibule, as if touched it could be a germ carrier. Participation sheets will be available.
- **Use of bathrooms will be prohibited in church so please use the bathroom and sanitize your hands before coming to church.** Bring hand sanitizer with you if you feel it necessary. We will have a limited supply. You must be wearing a mask to enter. Please be mindful of the 6 feet distancing requirement in entering and leaving.
- The Masses will be abbreviated and will not include a procession up the aisle, offertory procession, or sign of peace. The collection will not be taken up; in place of this, baskets will be located in the back of Church. Please feel free to place your contribution as you enter, after receiving Communion or as you leave Mass.
- The only one in the sanctuary will be the priest. No servers but readers and cantors will be used as required.
- **Reception of the Eucharist: Both the priest and communicant at communion will be masked.** Communicants are requested to maintain a six foot distance between others in line. Communion in the hand is strongly recommended. After receiving, the communicant steps to the side, lowers mask and consumes host. If you receive on the tongue and there is contact with the priest, he must stop the line and use sanitizer. Neither the priest nor the communicant may wear gloves for Communion. Communion will be distributed after the final blessing so that the faithful may leave church immediately while avoiding a back-up and observing social distancing. **There can be no public gathering outside church or in the social hall.**
- **RESTROOMS** in the hall do not meet the necessary safety guidelines for large group usage. They should be used **FOR EMERGENCY ONLY** in the parish hall.
- Offices will continue to operate as no face to face; however personnel continue to be available by phone and/or email.

We will all be adapting to this new situation and will evaluate these restrictions from both a safety and liturgical perspective as time goes on.

Working together as a parish family, we will become stronger by receiving the Eucharist again, coming together as a community of faith, and supporting and praying for one another and for all those infected by the virus who are recovering or who have lost loved ones. We look forward to that time when we again will be able to stay and gather with our fellow parishioners and friends. Thank you for your cooperation. Father Evers and I look forward to seeing you soon.

Yours in Christ,

***Msgr. Joseph Rebman, V. G.***

***Pastor***

***Vy. Rev. Glenn M. Evers***

***Associate Moderator of the Curia***

***Catholic Diocese of Wilmington***

***Parochial Vicar, St. Joseph on the Brandywine Parish***

***Deacon Michael Stankewicz***