

## ST. PETER CLAVER CHURCH

16922 St. Peter Claver Road, P.O. Box 240, St. Inigoes, MD 20684  
301-872-5460

**Father Scott Woods**

Pastor



May 21, 2020

Dear Parishioners of St. Peter Claver:

As most of you know, we will be resuming **Public Sunday Masses at St. Peter Claver at 10:00AM on Pentecost Sunday, May 31, 2020**. To do this in a safe, healthy, and orderly manner, I, utilizing the guidelines of the Archdiocese of Washington, will be offering our parishioners two options to attend **Public Sunday Masses** at St. Peter Claver: **Option 1** – Go inside the Church to participate in the Mass and **Option 2** - Stay in the vehicle on the Church grounds to participate in the Mass. In either case, you are asked to comply to the following procedures, which I would encourage you to review before you attend Mass to allow our public Masses to run smoothly:

### **GENERAL INFORMATION FOR ALL PARISHIONERS:**

**OBLIGATION TO ATTEND MASS:** You are still not obligated to attend Mass. The dispensation from the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation issued by the Archdiocese on March 12, 2020, is still in effect until further notice. For those who do not attend Mass, they are still encouraged to participate in the livestreamed Masses from St. Peter Claver's **Facebook Page:** <https://www.facebook.com/StPeterClaverCatholicChurch/>.

**VULNERABLE (HIGH RISK) PARISHIONERS:** Parishioners who are particularly vulnerable (e.g., over the age of sixty, or have existing heart or lung conditions, diabetes, or otherwise immunocompromised) are strongly encouraged to remain home and should not volunteer to fulfill any liturgical ministries.

**SICK PARISHIONERS:** Refrain from attending Mass if you or someone in your household is sick (i.e., if you or anyone in your household is running a fever, has a cough or is experiencing any kind of respiratory illness). This is to prevent the spread of any illness to those around you.

**ARRIVAL:** If you plan to attend Mass via Option 1 or Option 2, please plan to arrive early for seating and/or parking. Follow the directions of the Ushers regarding parking.

**GATHERING BEFORE AND AFTER MASS:** Gatherings of parishioners before and after Mass inside the church and outside on the parking lot are prohibited for your safety and well-being. Because the County still has restrictions on people assembling in groups outside of buildings, we ask that you come straight into the church at the start of Mass and return to your vehicles immediately after Mass.

**DEPARTURE:** Plan to quickly depart from the premises immediately after Mass. Follow the directions of the Ushers regarding exiting the parking lot.

## **OPTION 1 (INSIDE CHURCH):**

**LIMITED SEATING:** Because of the 6-foot social distancing requirement at Mass, attendance at Mass inside the church will be restricted in the number of parishioners who can attend at one time. Consequently, seating in the church will be allowed on a first come-first serve basis.

Those who will not be able to come inside of the Church either because of overflow conditions or because of their preference to remain outside of the Church are asked to return to or remain in their cars, respectively, and participate in Option 2 (See Below), which is to listen via Outdoor Sound System (or FM Channel, when it becomes available).

**SEATING PROCESS:** Seating is handled by the ushers, who will seat parishioners from the front to the back of the church with the exception of those with a disability, who will be asked to sit in a seat closest to the center aisle. Members of the same household may sit together, but there should be at least 6 feet of separation otherwise.

**FACE MASK:** All members of the assembly and all ministers, except the priest-celebrant, must always wear a face covering while in church. Children under the age of two years are not obligated to wear a face mask.

**SANITIZED HANDS:** All members of the assembly and all ministers are to sanitize their hands upon entering and exiting the church. Hand sanitizer will be provided at the entrances and exits. Parishioners are encouraged to bring their own hand sanitizer to use when needed while they are in the church.

**ENTRANCES AND EXITS:** There will be signs designating all entrances and exits. All parishioners except for those with disabilities will enter the church using the main entrance. Those with disabilities will enter the side door where there is only handicap parking. There will be three exits (i.e., main, handicap, and music). Upon entering and departing from Mass, parishioners are asked to maintain a social distance of 6 feet.

**DIRECTIONAL MARKINGS:** Markings will be on the floors, pews, and doors to direct people where to go. Ushers will also be there to help guide and direct members of the congregation.

**BATHROOMS:** Parishioners are asked to minimize the use of restrooms while in the church. If they or their children need to use the restroom, adults are asked to accompany the children and to sanitize the surfaces that are touched. Sanitation supplies will be provided. Please note that the restroom located in the church will be the only restroom available on the premises for health reasons.

**HAND CONTACT:** All hand contact, hugging or any other intimate types of greetings are prohibited. We will no longer be participating in the practice of holding hands during the Lord's Prayer and the Sign of Peace.

**OFFERTORY COLLECTION:** The offertory collection will be taken after Mass has concluded. Ushers with baskets will be outside collecting envelopes. We do encourage everyone to continue to either mail in their envelopes or make an offertory donation through our website, texting, mobile application, e-check, or electronic payment.

**COMMUNION DISTRIBUTION:** Only the “Body of Christ” will be offered during Mass. The “Blood of Christ” will not be offered at this time.

Distribution of Communion will take longer than usual because of the social distancing requirements and because both those present in Church and those outside of the Church attending Mass will receive Communion. So please be patient. (This will be a good time to say special prayers, such as the Rosary or the Divine Mercy Chaplet.) Ushers will direct the congregation how to proceed to communion as follows:

- Those who cannot receive communion should not come forward for a blessing; there is a blessing for everyone at the end of Mass.
- Children who cannot receive communion, but who are old enough to remain quietly in their pew as their parents come up for communion should do so for their safety. We understand that sometimes this is difficult to do, so please do not feel forced to leave your child unattended in the pew.
- Those who can receive communion, please follow these steps in order:
  1. Follow the direction of the Ushers as you go up for Communion wearing your mask and remaining six feet from others in the line and from the minister.
  2. Keep your mask on and remain six feet away from the minister while he shows the Host and says, “The Body of Christ.”
  3. Keep your mask on, respond “Amen,” and then approach the minister.
  4. Keep your mask on, place one hand under the other while keeping your fingers together and receive the Host in your hand.
  5. Keep on your mask while stepping six feet away from the minister.
  6. Loosen carefully your facial covering (or mask by an ear loop), consume the Host, and quickly replace the facial covering.
  7. Return to your seat following the directional signs or the direction of the Ushers.

**SPECIAL NOTE:** Although each person retains the right to receive the Host on the tongue, the Centers for Disease Control have recommended against it; but more importantly, out of love for our brothers and sisters and out of kind concern for the vulnerable and our sacred ministers, those who normally receive on the tongue are respectfully asked to consider receiving in the hand as a temporary measure. It is a legitimate practice attested to in our Catholic Tradition since the ancient Church.

**FINAL BLESSING:** For health reasons, I will not be greeting the parishioners before and after Mass.

## **OPTION 2 (INSIDE VEHICLES ON CHURCH GROUNDS):**

**GENERAL:** Those who will not be able to come inside of the Church either because of overflow conditions inside the Church or because of their preference to remain outside of the Church at this time are asked to return to or remain in their cars, respectively, and participate in Option 2 which is to listen via Outdoor Sound System (or FM Channel, when it becomes available). Please keep in mind that, although you are in your cars, you are expected to attend Mass from the Entrance (Introductory Rites) to the Final Blessing (Concluding Rites).

**FACE MASK:** Bring your face mask. You are required to wear it to receive Holy Communion. Father will be wearing a mask to distribute Communion (although he is not required to wear it at other times during the Mass. Children under the age of two years are not obligated to wear a face mask.

**COMMUNION DISTRIBUTION:** Only the “Body of Christ” will be offered during Mass. Distribution of Communion will take longer than usual because of the social distancing requirements and also because both those present in Church and those outside of the Church attending Mass while in their cars will receive Communion. So please be patient. (This will be a good time to say special prayers, such as the Rosary or the Divine Mercy Chaplet.)

Parishioners attending Mass from their cars and desiring to receive Communion will be directed by the Ushers to drive around the circle while maintaining some distancing between cars. Each car will stop at the Choir side entrance door around the circle where there will be a tent under which Father will be standing. Keep in mind the following:

- Those who cannot receive communion should not come forward for a blessing; there is a blessing for everyone at the end of Mass.
- Children who cannot receive communion, but who are old enough to remain in the car as their parents come up for communion should do so for their safety; however, parents should not feel forced to leave their child if uncomfortable in doing so .

Those who can receive communion from the stopped car that is parked in front of Father’s tent are asked to follow these steps in order:

1. Put on your mask and get out of the car.
2. Keep your mask on and go up for Communion remaining six feet from the minister.
3. Keep your mask on and remain six feet away from the minister while he shows the Host and says, “The Body of Christ.”
4. Keep your mask on, respond “Amen,” and then approach the minister.
5. Keep your mask on, place one hand under the other while keeping your fingers together and receive the Host in your hand.
6. Keep your mask on and step six feet away from the minister.
7. Loosen carefully your facial covering (or mask by an ear loop), consume the Host, and quickly replace the facial covering.
8. Return to your car and pull off returning to a parking space following the directions of the Ushers.

## **A NOTE ABOUT PUBLIC WEEKDAY MASSES**

I will also be resuming **Public Daily Masses** starting on **Monday, May 25, 2020 with Latin Masses on Mondays and Wednesdays at 6:00PM** and **Saturday Masses in English at 8:00AM** at St. Peter Claver. These Masses, however, will only be offered inside the Church. They will be livestreamed based on the availability of appropriate resources. Check into our **Facebook Page:** <https://www.facebook.com/StPeterClaverCatholicChurch/>

## **CONCLUSION**

I understand that these are a lot of changes, some of which might seem to change the very essence of our unique culture at St. Peter Claver; however, at this time, they are all necessary to ensure as best as we can a relatively safe environment. Even with these critical changes, we cannot guarantee that no one will get the virus or any other ailment, and this is why it is necessary for you to decide what is best for you and your family when considering whether or not you should be attending Mass at this time.

Yes, the next few weeks will likely be a little bumpy. Yes, we will likely mess up here and there, but do not fret. As long as we work together as a parish community, we can make this work and provide a safe, healthy, and loving environment in which we can again publicly worship and praise the Lord joyfully in Spirit and in Truth.

Please, if you have any questions or concerns, contact the Parish Office at 301-872-5460 or me directly at 301-502-1955

Your Father and Brother in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Fr. Scott Woods". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Fr. Scott Woods