



St. Augustine/St. Edward, Austin MN

“For I know the plans I have for you” declares the Lord, “plan to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” Jer. 29:11

All of us have been impacted by the Coronavirus over the past two months. Whether directly succumbing to the disease it causes or experiencing its far-reaching emotional, psychological and economic effects all of us have been affected in some way. In an effort to protect the health and safety of our local communities, especially vulnerable populations, Bishop Quinn suspended the public celebration of Mass on March 19. This was a painful, but necessary decision in view of the common good. As the state begins to re-open sectors of our communities, the public celebration of Mass was opened to resume anytime after May 27 when deemed appropriate and safe for a local community. I am working with a team of people that are helping to plan our re-opening at St. Augustine/St. Edward. Resuming the public celebration of Mass will look differently than before, given the recommendations of health experts. We are planning on starting “Simply” so that we grow gradually, make adjustments as needed and keep everyone safe. In this light we will begin by opening only St. Augustine with all masses at that venue. The following points highlight some of these changes:

1. Catholics will continue to be dispensed from Sunday Mass and Holy Day Masses. While public Masses will resume, vulnerable populations, the elderly, and those with underlying health conditions are asked to follow the most up to date health regulations and remain at home. There are many who might feel uncomfortable returning to Mass. They, too, have legitimate reason to remain at home. Anyone who is feeling ill, lives in a household with someone who has been tested positive or is quarantined for Coronavirus must not come to Mass for the safety of others. --Mass will be live streamed on the Parish Facebook/Website. Mass is also available at different times via television.

2. Access to Mass will be limited. In order to prevent risk of infection, attendance at Mass will be limited to 25% of the church’s capacity or to the proper social distancing necessary to remain 6 feet (outside of family units).

3. Hand hygiene and masks are key. Parishioners are required to be wearing a mask upon entry into the Church and through the Mass (accept for the reception of Holy Communion). They will also be expected to sanitize their hands immediately upon entry to the Church.

4. Pews will be sectioned off. In order to maintain six feet distance between parishioners every other pew is roped off. There are stickers 🧡 on the floor every 6 feet so people also keep the proper social distance when entering, existing and processing up for Communion. A Greeter/Usher will seat people.

5. Singing will be limited. Because of the risk of infection due to increased aerosolized particles, singing will be limited. Hymnals are removed from Church.

6. Parishioners will receive Holy Communion in a safe manner. The priest or other minister will wear a mask when distributing Holy Communion. They will sanitize their hands immediately before Communion and whenever they accidentally come into contact with another person. Parishioners are encouraged to receive Holy Communion on the hand; but another option would be to refrain from receiving Holy Communion and make an act of spiritual communion instead. Parishioners will receive the Holy Communion, step over to the side, take off their mask and then consume the Body of Christ and replace the mask.

7. The Church will be sanitized after every Mass. To ensure everyone's safety, parish staff and volunteers will sanitize commonly touched surfaces and pews after each celebration of the Mass.

8. There will be no Collection. Instead of "passing the basket" a receptacle will be available so that parishioners can drop off the envelope or offering. --The gifts of bread & wine will not be brought forward, but will remain in the sanctuary.

9. Avoid personal contact with anyone. The sign of peace remains suspended: physical contact must be avoided at all costs. Other than a spouse, no hands should be held during the "Our Father". --As great as our desire is to reconnect with friends and parishioners there is to be NO socializing before or after mass, please.

10. Those who are sick must stay home. Anyone who has symptoms of any sickness (even mild symptoms) may not attend the public celebration of the Mass.

Distribution of Communion

Holy Communion will be available directly **AFTER MASS is finished. Communion distribution will take place down the center aisle; one side of the Church at a time following 6 feet spacing marked on the floor.** After receiving communion, **we are asking that you immediately exit out the side DOORS ON YOUR SIDE (either the North or South entrance) and walk to your cars.** If you return to your pew to pray after receiving communion, please be aware of others and maintain an appropriate social distance of at least 6 feet. If you return to your pew after receiving communion, please remain in your pew until communion distribution has concluded, and then exit the church in a timely manner. We will need to clean and sanitize the church after each Mass so we ask everyone to exit shortly after Communion distribution is completed.