

Re: Church reopening! From Fr. George

May 29, 2020

Dear Parish Family:

Thanks for your patience with yesterday's pastoral list of 4 Pauline principles...without specifics on reopening. Now, how do we put 1) valued unity, 2) higher esteem for others, 3) looking out for other people's interests, and 4) voluntary assumption of humble positions into action?

The following 10 specifics are drafted to conform to Met. JOSEPH's instructions, state guidelines, and local requirements. All at the same time!!!

1. Social distancing of six feet to be observed. (Family groups can sit closely)
2. Masks are to be worn.
3. For this week only we will be limited to ten laity in attendance - unless Sayidna OK's more.
4. We will have social distancing marks on the main aisle for the communion line.
5. Ushers will help family groups and individuals figure out best, safe seating patterns.
6. We will have one chanter at a time in each service, with others maintaining social distance.
7. Written protocols will be posted at the doors.
8. There will be hand sanitizer and/or wipes available. Feel free to bring your own too.
9. Venerating icons without touching them is temporarily recommended.
10. Altar servers, clergy and chanters do not count toward the total of ten laity in attendance.

We only learned about the temporary limit to ten in Sayidna's letter this morning. We have asked him for a 'variance' on the limit of ten and will let you know if he OK's it.

Sayidna JOSEPH's position continues to emphasize application of "love your neighbor as yourself" in this Covid recovery setting. His order to comply with government limits is meant to 'go the extra' mile in limiting contagion that might harm the vulnerable. They are also meant, no doubt, as a testimony of civic-minded good citizenship to our community.

I am trying to do a lot of listening around the parish these days. I hear such a variety of ideas about the origins, spread and true health effects of the virus, the government limits & the reasons for them, etc. etc. We have smart and motivated members. Many opinions. At some stages of life I really enjoyed examining issues, forming opinions & arguing for them. Not now.

For now, the old age calling is to put those four principles from Philippians 2 into actual practice in my life ... while encouraging the whole parish to do the same. By deferring to the felt needs of some for a greater sense of protection than I might find necessary for myself, (not to mention honoring the bishop) I honor Christ and my neighbor, promoting patient, tolerant unity in Christ as the highest good.

All love and blessings,
Fr. George

P.s. - many thanks to Seraphim McCann and Marc Sacoolas for getting streaming of our services up and running!