



Saint Mary's Byzantine Catholic Church

(Saint Mary's Ruthenian Greek Catholic Church, Inc.)

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Father Edward G. Cimbala, D.Min. ~ Pastor

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory forever!

I hope this finds you well. These past few months have been trying for all of us. Thanks be to God we are seeing some light at the end of the tunnel.

St. Mary's is now able to open for public worship as New York City has moved into phase 2.

**ST. MARY'S WILL BE OPEN FOR PUBLIC WORSHIP BEGINNING ON
SUNDAY, JULY 5!!!**

For 10:00 AM Divine Liturgy

6:00 PM Divine Liturgy will begin on July 12

In order to do this, I was required to submit a reopening plan and a completed checklist to the Eparchy. This has been approved and so we can reopen following the mandates of the city.

First, I cannot stress too highly that, as we reopen our doors that if you are ill, immuno-compromised, or uncomfortable being in crowds or using public transportation, please remain at home. Bishop Kurt has stated that you are still dispensed from the "Sunday Obligation," until further notice. We will continue to live stream our Liturgies on Facebook, for those who are unable to attend. Some good news regarding our live streaming.. we have received a very generous contribution enabling us to make major equipment upgrades that will greatly improve our video and sound.

Attendance

In Phase 2, church seating will be limited to 40 people for each Divine Liturgy. This number is based on capacity limits and social distancing guidelines. We will celebrate the Divine Liturgy on Sunday at 10:00 AM and 6:00 PM as a result we will be able to accommodate 80 people on a Sunday. I will celebrate the 4:00 Divine Liturgy at Holy Cross beginning on Saturday, July 11.

My goal is to accommodate everyone who wishes to attend the Divine Liturgy and not turn anyone away. Therefore, advance reservations are required – for both the 10:00 AM and 6:00 PM Liturgies. (Reservations are not required for Holy Cross.)

There are three ways to reserve your seats:

1) The preferred method is online registration:

<https://reopen.church/r/bG1sxAnm>

2) Email – fredcimabla@gmail.com

3) Phone – 212-677-0516

If you have access to the internet the link above is the preferred way to “reserve” your seat. This program updates in real time and once we reach our limit you will not be able to register. If you call or email me I will register you on this program and let you know if we have the space. The registration deadline each week will be Thursday. You will be able to register online for multiple weeks. When we come to a point where our capacity has been reached you may wish to attend the 6:00 PM Liturgy. If someone wishes to attend and is “bumped” they will get first choice for the next week. This really should not be a problem as our usual attendance is less than 40.

Worship

Entrance: For the time being entry into the church will be by way of the side door located at the end of the driveway.

Doors: To minimize unnecessary contact, we will try to keep all doors open so that you do not have to touch the door handles (restrooms excluded – see below). We will have hand sanitizer available in the Narthex as you enter, and you are encouraged to use it. All inside doors will be propped open.

Pews: will be marked with signs saying, “please sit here”. Pews are marked for individuals and with spaces for couples or households. Every other pew is blocked off. Advance registration will give me the opportunity to mark the pews as needed each week. Please be respectful of these measures. People who live in the same house may sit together, without regard for social distancing. Yes, you might not get your usual seat, but please sit in available places as instructed by an usher.

All books have been removed from the pews. We have been instructed to not have printed bulletins or other materials available. I will abide by that. Bulletins will continue to be posted on the website and sent by e-mail to all who have supplied me with an e-mail address. I will also e-mail the links to the Metropolitan Cantors’ Institute’s music for the coming Sunday, if you wish to print it out with your personal printer and bring it with you.

Overall, the Liturgy will be chanted and sung from memory for the time being. I’m sure you will do well with this and I will be able to hear you singing through your mask!

Icons should not be revered by touching and/or kissing for the time being.

Note that the webcam will be in the center aisle in place of the tetrapod.

Masks

The State, City and Eparchy require that anyone who enters the church must wear a mask. Even though we will be marking the pews for social distancing, it is still prudent to wear a mask. The parish has a limited number of masks that we can use for those who do not have one.

Although we will practice “social distancing,” it is important to wear your mask during Liturgy. As far as I can discern at this time, masks available to the public are more intended to keep the wearer from spreading germs when they sneeze or cough. In this sense, we are responsible for each other’s health.

I will not wear a mask during the Liturgy. I will stay up on the altar platform to observe social distancing. Mary Ann will not be wearing a mask. You will notice a barrier in front of the cantor stand. However, I will wear a mask during the distribution of Holy Communion (more on this below).

Offertory

We will have a collection box at the entrance of the Nave for people to place their offertory before or after Liturgy. We have been instructed not to use our collection baskets. You can, of course, continue to give your offering online or by mail if you have been doing so, but this box will be available for your offertory.

Holy Communion

We will distribute Holy Communion according to our ancient tradition: the Body and Blood of Christ will be commingled in the chalice and distributed with a spoon. During this time, however, we must have a couple of modifications:

- 1) Communion will be distributed by use of a stainless-steel iced-tea spoon. A separate spoon will be used for each communicant. The stainless-steel spoons will be cleansed to be re-used later. We have more than enough spoons for each Liturgy.
- 2) Because we must observe “social distancing,” and considering the greater length of time it will take to communicate each individual, I will distribute Communion after the live-stream has completed. You will be instructed at each liturgy on the reception of the Eucharist.

Coffee Social

We are temporarily suspending our coffee social. If you congregate outside following the liturgy, please observe social distancing rules.

Restrooms

If you need to use the restroom, it is very important that you use the provided disinfectant wipes to clean every surface you come into contact with, especially the toilet and sink handles and fixtures. To insure that there be properly sanitized facilities for each liturgy – stalls and urinals will be marked for each. Restrooms will be cleaned every week, but we should each do our part to keep them clean and safe. There will be a hand sanitizer station at the entrance of the restrooms. There should only be two people in the restroom at a time. Proper social distancing should be observed as you wait to enter the restroom.

Confessions

Call me so we can arrange a time for confession. The mystery will be celebrated following the proper protocols of social distancing. Usually I have been hearing confessions outside the rectory door. I will

also be available both before and after the Divine Liturgies if possible. Both the penitent and the priest need to be wearing masks.

Anointing of the Sick

If someone desires to receive the Anointing of the Sick, this also must be done wearing masks. I will have a sterile cotton swab to anoint the person with the blessed oil. Please call to arrange for this anointing to be celebrated at the church. Hospital visits are being discouraged or forbidden. If you are the hospital and wish to receive the sacraments I understand that there are Catholic chaplains assigned to the hospitals.

Funerals

Funerals may be celebrated in the church following the social distancing protocols and will be limited to 40 people in the church. Bear in mind that funeral directors may not wish to bring the body into church. We will follow their directions. We will do our best to make sure that the deceased is given all due honor in our services.

We should, in spite of any personal or political feelings concerning this present situation, honor limitations that are placed on us, for the glory of God and to let our light shine in the city.

I appreciate your patience and understanding as we work through these procedures over the next few weeks.

We praise God that He has given us this path to worship as a community again, and will all do what He has given us to do. I am looking forward to the time we can gather together to celebrate the Divine Liturgy and make a joyful (though masked) noise unto the Lord.

Sincerely yours in the service of Christ and His people,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Fr. Ed Cimbala". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "E" and "C".

Fr. Ed Cimbala
Pastor