

# OUR LADY STAR OF THE SEA CATHOLIC CHURCH

Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston

(Staffed by the Josephite Priests and Brothers)



May 20, 2020

Greetings! I pray that you are remaining safe and well during this COVID-19 pandemic.

As many of us already know, the churches within the State of Texas are part of the facilities that have been advised to reopen as part of the phase one of reopening. In response to this, the Cardinal has given permission for pastors of our Archdiocese to reopen their parishes at 25% capacity, if the pastor decides to do so. After due consultation with the Pastoral Council members and some of our members, it was proposed that we begin to return to mass on Pentecost Sunday, May 31, 2020. We will have two masses, ~~8:30 am and 11:00 am~~. The gap between the two masses is to allow for proper cleaning and sanitization of the church building before the next mass.

For a smooth transition to this reopening, the following safety measures have been put in place:

A Pandemic Response Team has been formed which is comprised of the Health Ministry, Hospitality Ministry and the Altar Society to ensure that sanitation of the church prior to reopening and between mass is administered properly.

- The use of holy water at mass will be suspended until further notice.
- Only one door will be used to enter the church and only one door to exit
- A Health Ministry representative will be available to take your temperature at the entrance door
- Face masks must be worn. Masks will be made available to members who don't have one. Hand sanitizer will be available as well.
- Sunday missalettes will be distributed to those attending masses, but it must be taken home by those who have them and not left back in the pews.
- Offerings can be dropped in a designated basket before or after each mass. You may also choose to drop your offering in the secured mailbox located near the handicap parking lot. Offerings will no longer be taken up by the ushers as done prior to the pandemic
- You are also encouraged to use the online giving app, Givelify, in an effort to continue to support our parish. Please visit our website, [olsoshoustontx.com](http://olsoshoustontx.com) and hit the donation button to give your offering and donations online.
- Seating will be administered by the Hospitality Team to ensure the appropriate 6 foot distancing in the pews. However, families coming from the same household may sit together but adhere to the 6 foot rule.
- Only one lector will be required. A schedule will continue to be administered by the Liturgy chairperson. We will refrain from using extraordinary ministers at this time.
- Altar servers, if any, will be seated six feet away from the priest on the sanctuary
- The choir and musicians must maintain social distance. As such, the first pew on the choir side will be reserved for the choir members.

- We will maintain a single file during communion, with communicants lining up six feet apart with only the priest distributing communion. Communion will only be by the hand. Communion must be consumed before a communicant proceeds to her/his seat. There will be no chalice or distribution of the blood to the faithful. We are still expected to come forward for communion with our masks on and gently lift them from the bottom when consuming the communion.
- Visitor, birthday, and anniversary recognitions will be handled from the pulpit and those celebrants will be acknowledged from their seats.
- For the time being, no one will be allowed to congregate in the parish hall after mass. As such no coffee or doughnuts will be available after masses.

Funeral Masses will begin to be celebrated after reopening the church on May 31,

The sacrament of baptism can now be celebrated in our parish. However, we will exercise caution in the use of water and oils. We will not use the same water for each child. We will not touch another child with the same oil after touching one.

We are working on how to celebrate First communion of our candidates for the sacrament. We may need multiple celebrations to keep the numbers for the ceremony at the 25% limit.

Confessions will still be offered as directed by the Pastor. To observe social distancing the sacrament will be undertaken in the crying room 30 minutes before each mass or by appointments. Also those waiting for confession must practice “social distancing”.

I can administer the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick if called upon. However, due to some limited visitation policies still in place in some medical facilities at this critical time, the ministry of the hospital Chaplain Corp, who has been trained in the procedures of the medical facility regarding access to patients, will be greatly employed as we ensure hospital visitation for the sick of our parish. Please contact me regarding your loved one’s need in this area and I will contact and arrange visits by the appropriate Hospital Chaplain..

The Cardinal made it clear that the Sunday obligation to attend Mass on Sunday and Holy Days continues to be suspended. He emphasized, “**No one is required to attend church during this time of pandemic**”. In particular, the most vulnerable among us are encouraged to safely remain home. Those who are or feel sick are asked to safely stay home as well. **Please note that the dispensation of the faithful not to attend Mass is still in effect.**

To ensure that no one is left out of participation at our weekend masses going forward, we will continue to live stream the masses via our Googles Meet video conference call. We are also working on live streaming via Facebook and live YouTube channel. We are only allowed 25% occupancy capacity at each mass, and that amounts to about 60 people at one time, that include the priest, the ministers serving at mass and the choir members.

If at any occasions, we experience higher number than expected at mass, we are making plans to make an overflow area available in the hall with all the precautionary measures observed.

Our morning prayer call will continue as usual from 8:00 am to 8:45 am. We are not resuming our weekday masses as of yet.

Lastly my brothers and sisters, I ask you to pray for our deliverance from this event and while we await the work of the Lord on our behalf, let us not forget to praise him through our spiritual reflection and pledge our continued support to keeping Our Lady Star of the Sea a thriving parish of his Faithful.

As our country slowly reopens, let us continue to observe the necessary precautionary measures that have been very helpful in our fight against the virus so far: maintain social distance, wash your hands, wear face covering in public, avoid touching your face, and stay home if you don't have to go out.

Enclosed is a Novena to the holy spirit. We will recite this during our morning prayer conference call beginning Friday, May 22. It will be available on our website; [olsoshoustontx.com](http://olsoshoustontx.com).

I look forward to seeing all of you on the May 31 when we officially reopen our church. You may call me at 202-340-1847 or the parish office at 713-674-9206 for any questions you may have.

Thanks very much for your cooperation.

Yours in Christ,

Rev. Stephen Sohe, SSJ, Pastor