

April 19, 2020

Dear Parishioners,

On Holy Thursday, Archbishop ListECKI issued a directive authorizing the celebration of “parking lot” Masses on Sundays, beginning with Easter Sunday, under certain conditions, which included: (a) people must remain in their cars at all times; (b) if communion is distributed, it must be distributed by only the priest celebrant; (c) communion must be distributed directly to the recipient by the priest going car-to-car; and (d) no extraordinary ministers of communion are to be used. He also reminded us that Mass can be celebrated in the Church building if the total number of people involved, including the celebrant and other ministers, is no more than 10.



For a number of reasons, I concluded that “parking lot” Masses would be a bad idea at either SJB or STA: (1) it would be a poor prayer experience; (2) people couldn’t share in the Liturgy of the Word in any meaningful way; (3) distribution of communion would be extremely awkward and time-consuming; (4) without loudspeakers, people could not follow the Mass auricularly; (5) without elevated altars, people could not follow the Mass visually; (6) there would be no way to control vehicular traffic (arrange cars on the lot, handle overflow, control entrance onto/egress from the lot); (7) the requirement that people remain in the cars at all times mooted the question of accessibility of restroom facilities but raises some very problematic alternative possibilities; (8) the response to medical emergency situations, should they arise, would be dangerously impeded; and (9) the weather, while predictable, could prove to be notoriously uncooperative.

The priests of Sheboygan County were talking about a couple of alternative locations to church parking lots as possibilities, but even larger sites (high school and/or mall parking lots, for example) wouldn’t have provided solutions to some of these challenges.

On Easter Monday, having concluded that there were some insurmountable problems with the idea, the Archbishop rescinded his authorization of Sunday “parking lot” Masses. But he did not rescind the original guidance about celebrating Mass in Church with no more than ten people. Since March 18th, in accordance with the Archbishop’s original directive, I’ve been celebrating “private” Masses, thereby honoring the intentions which people had previously placed for deceased loved ones. “Private” Masses, in which the priest celebrates the Eucharistic Liturgy by himself, although permitted, are never the ideal.

So, my intention is to start opening up our regularly scheduled weekday and Sunday Masses at SJB and STA to up to nine attendees other than myself. We will begin by inviting the person who has requested each particular Mass’s intention to come with one other person and pray that Mass with me on the day and time for which it was scheduled. Then we will fill in the remaining spaces on a “by invitation” basis, with invitees being selected from a standing list of those who have indicated a desire to attend Mass at SJB or STA on a weekday or weekend when Mass is being offered. Access to the Church for any particular Mass will be limited to those who have been invited, and social distancing following the CDC guidelines must be observed once inside the Church. Details are still being hashed out, but we intend to start this weekend: Divine Mercy Sunday. To enter your name on the list for SJB please phone or email Julie Krueger (920-892-4006 or sjbparish@sjbpymouth.org); for STA please phone or email Chris Kammann (920-876-2457 or st.thomas.aquinas@frontier.com). And please be patient as we work out the kinks.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Philip D. Reifenberg'.

Fr. Philip D. Reifenberg, Pastor