



Parish Reopening Information – Updated 5/28/20

As we slowly begin the process of reopening, St. Mary will follow all guidelines and requirements mandated by the Archdiocese of Chicago and the State of Illinois. The primary concern throughout this process is the health and safety for all. We realize that these new procedures at church will feel very different and will take some time to get used to. Note that the procedures will continue to evolve as state and Archdiocesan requirements are updated. We continue to thank you for your patience and understanding through this transition as we carefully enter this next phase!

Parish Reopening FAQs

Here are some answers to common questions you might have about the reopening.

Why are we reopening now?

On May 13th, the Archdiocese of Chicago released a comprehensive, **phased plan** to reopen its parishes. The plan provides procedures and processes to prepare for the gradual reopening for sacramental liturgies and eventually the celebration of Mass. As of Friday, May 22nd, St. Mary of the Annunciation is now certified to begin sacramental celebration as outlined in Phase 1. Opening for Mass will take place later in Phase 2, which is likely still weeks away. The primary concern throughout this process is the health and safety for all.

Why is reopening taking so long?

The Archdiocese is moving through stages of reopening very carefully in order to make the reopening as safe as possible. We've been directed to incorporate best practices from government and healthcare into the sacraments. That means re-thinking our processes so that we offer the sacraments, with liturgical integrity, while respecting this guidance. For example, initially, not more than 10 parishioners may be in the church at one time. Surfaces must be disinfected after every parishioner contact. It takes time to plan and execute the sacraments in this new way.

When will things be back to normal?

We anticipate that we will be living with the reality of a modified sacramental life for some time. Our hope is that these procedures will allow us to be strengthened by the sacraments while also following our urgent Christian duty to safeguard the lives and health of our sisters and brothers. Please be patient with us. It's been more than 100 years since we last celebrated the sacraments in a pandemic. Our process is fluid and we are learning as we go.

What precautions are taken to make sure that it's safe to come to church?

Some precautions will be the same regardless of the sacramental activity. Everyone over the age of 2 will be required to wear a mask in order to enter the church as well as maintain social distance from anyone you don't share a home with. You will notice that we're going to be regularly cleaning/disinfecting surfaces in the churches, especially those touched by parishioners. There are also going to be limitations on the number of people in church for all activities for the foreseeable future. Other changes will be specific to certain sacramental activities. *See the [Reconciliation FAQ](#) posted on the website for additional information specific to this sacrament.* And one important request to keep church safe at this time - if you feel at all sick, please stay at home!



What's it going to be like when I come back?

We recognize that returning to church at this time will feel different than what you are used to. For each activity, we will have volunteer "greeters" at church who will welcome you and guide you through the experience. As long as there are guidelines in place limiting the number of people permitted to gather, we will need to have a reservation system to attend church activities including when we go back to Mass. Again, we know this will all feel very different and we appreciate your understanding and patience with the procedures and with each other as we resume life back at church.

I'm in a vulnerable group. Should I come back to church or Reconciliation?

We urge people who are defined as "vulnerable" by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Illinois Department of Public Health to use their best judgment about returning to church. This includes people who are over age 65, as well as those who have underlying health conditions that would make them vulnerable to viral infection. While we believe that our procedures will make resuming sacramental ministry as safe as possible, there is no way to completely eliminate the risk of COVID-19 transmission at present. If you have a concern about whether you are morally obligated to come back to the sacraments despite being in a vulnerable population, we urge you to speak to one of our priests.

Any other restrictions for coming back to church?

Yes -- if you feel sick, please stay at home! As we have heard, even people who do not feel ill can be asymptomatic carriers which is a reason why wearing a mask is so important. However, if you feel at all ill, we ask you to please stay at home. As Christians, we have a responsibility for the health and safety of those around us. Staying home if you feel ill is an important way to exercise that responsibility.

Again, thank you for your patience as we continue this journey together! If you have additional questions, you can email parish@stmota.org or leave a message at the parish office 847-223-0010. With the parish office currently closed, we monitor voicemail and will return your call within 24-48 hours.

The parish will continue to share updates on the website www.stmaryfc.org