

May 15, 2020

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Prayers and greetings from Immaculate Conception Church, Fairmont. Hope all is well with you at this unprecedented time. As you know, on March 14<sup>th</sup> our Bishop suspended public Mass due to Corona Pandemic and now after more than two months, Bishop is allowing us to reopen on May 23<sup>rd</sup> for public Mass.

From April 30<sup>th</sup> through today there have been no reported cases in our county. It shows that we are moving forward conquering the tiny but giant virus killer. Let us support all those who are fighting against this invisible enemy and pray for the scientists who are working hard to find a vaccine.

We may live with COVID-19 for months or years, let's not live in fear but learn to be happy and live with the facts. I believe you have received phone calls from one of our parish 'Help Task Force' inquiring of any assistance is needed for buying groceries and medicines and informing you about our Mass online. This letter brings many positive notes.

As our state lifted many restrictions, we are going to begin our "New Normal Regular Masses" beginning Saturday May 23, 2020 at 5:30 P.M based on the guidelines given by our Diocese. The Diocese wanted you to know that if you are a parishioner in the vulnerable category (due to age or health issues), you are encouraged to remain at home and if you are fearful about attending Mass because of the spread of the Coronavirus you should remain at home. You are dispensed from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass until further notice. Those parishioners who feel sick in any way and those with any form of a cough should remain at home.

When we open our parish for public Mass, there will be safety protocols and guidelines to be followed. I request your patience and understanding during these "new normal Mass" and you to adapt to the new directives for attending Mass in our beautiful parish. Even if you are remaining at home, it's good to know the new protocols and guidelines. The protocols are given below:

1. The seating capacity of our parish is limited to 40 seats due to 6ft social distancing rules between congregants. Hence, to attend Weekend Mass, preregistration is mandatory. Mass schedule: Saturday 5:30 PM; Sunday 8:30AM and 11:00 AM. You can sign up for your preferred Mass by going to our website: [www.ICFAIRMONT.COM](http://www.ICFAIRMONT.COM) and following the Signup.com link. You may use the following direct link: <https://signup.com/go/kJDFjpu>; You may also sign up by phone 304-363-5796 ext.11 (Monday - Friday between 10:00 A.M. to 1:00 P.M.) and by email: church@ICFairmont (before every Friday by 1:00 P.M.). You can only sign up for the upcoming weekend Masses, not three weeks forward whenever you sign in or email or call in. But, if the seats are full, you may sign up for the next weekend.
2. The parish door (only one entrance door located at Maryland Ave.) will be opened 30 minutes prior to the Mass, there will be an Usher outside the door to check you in based on the preregistration list. As you enter the vestibule, there will be an another Usher to direct you to the facemasks (if you don't have one), sanitizer (you must use it), bulletin (pick one by yourselves) and the designated marked seats (choose as you wish). Those Ushers will have a facemask and gloves and will be 6ft away from you.
3. The pews (disinfected) that are designated for seating are all marked and prepared to ensure 6ft separation. Every other pew is closed. Members of a single household may sit together. They are requested to give the total number of the household attending the Mass during preregistration. If more than two members are attending from a family, they may sit in the same pew. There will not be anyone sitting in the same pew due to 6ft rules.
4. When you come to Mass you will need to bring a facemask for each person other than toddlers/infants. Those who have difficulty in breathing are encouraged to remain at home. Throughout the Mass you are not allowed to remove the facemask even when you stand in line for communion (there will be a 6ft mark for communion line up). The only

time you will be allowed to move your facemask a bit up is when you consume the host after receiving preferably in your hand at communion from the presider.

5. We will not be using worship aids, hymnals and missalettes at this time. The worship songs will be shown on the screen.
6. The collection basket will not be passed during offertory and there will not be an offertory procession. Two baskets will be placed at the each sides of first pews; you may drop your contribution envelopes while you come to receive communion.
7. The presider will be sanitizing his hands after the offertory and before the distribution of communion. He will do hand sanitization at all the times whenever there is accidental touching of a person's fingers when giving out the host. In order to keep the appropriate 6ft distancing, the floor will be marked in 6ft increments going from the spot of distributing communion by the Presider to the farthest end pew. Ushers will invite each row, first one side, then the other beginning from the back pews. Each person must approach individually. There will be a detailed explanation at each Mass before the communion procession begins.
8. To maintain social distancing, we will not be socializing before or after Mass. Please don't socialize in the vestibule or aisles.
9. The Parish bathroom will be available but only use when absolutely needed. We will need to sanitize after each person.
10. At the end of Mass you will be dismissed from the front and back using all the four doors. If you have trouble going through front doors, I would not recommend sitting on that side near the front door. Please follow Ushers directions.
11. We need two or three Ushers and three cleaning crew per Mass to help Ushers to disinfect the Church building. It may take 20-30 minutes to disinfect the Church building between Masses. Contact the office if willing to volunteer. There will be a special meeting for all those who are willing to be an Usher or on the cleaning crew on Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> at 7:00 PM in the Church in order to go over the procedures.
12. Following the same protocols for the weekend Mass we are allowed to schedule Weddings, Baptisms, First Holy Communion, Confirmation and Funerals. If necessary, I will be available to come to your home or nursing home to give Anointing and Communion as per your request. Sacrament of Confession will be administered by appointment one hour prior to each weekend Mass. Daily Mass will be celebrated at 8:00 A.M. Tuesday through Friday. For more information check our weekly online bulletin.

We will do the best we can to ensure a prayerful experience at Holy Mass within the safety protocols given. I know this is difficult and tough, but during this transition period to celebrate the public Mass, these are necessary steps. If I find that we have enough demand (all the 120 seats are full) to add another Mass on Sunday evening, I am open to it. For the time being let us celebrate all the positive notes.

As we approach the feast of Pentecost, let us be open to the Holy Spirit and ask to the Spirit to bless our lives.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jojan Joseph". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

Fr. Jojan Joseph,  
Immaculate Conception, Fairmont