

OUR LADY OF HOPE PARISH

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July 2, 2020

Greetings in the Lord!

I am very happy to announce that Our Lady of Hope Parish will resume our normal schedule of weekend Masses this coming weekend of July 4th and 5th. This is a great joy, but it also carries significant responsibility for me and for all who attend Mass. Similar to the opening of weekday Masses, there are a number of restrictions set by the Archbishop to protect public health. The Our Lady of Hope Parish website (www.ourladyofhopeparish.com) and the Archdiocese of Hartford's website (www.archdioceseofhartford.org) have the full guidelines for reopening for all parishes of the Archdiocese of Hartford. In this letter, I want to emphasize some points and to give some details that will be unique to Our Lady of Hope.

First, remember that at this time there is not obligation to attend Sunday Mass. In fact, if you are over 65 years of age and/or have any underlying health concerns, it is recommended for you to stay at home. Furthermore, if you have been in contact with anyone who is ill or show any symptoms of respiratory illness, you should not come into church. Since, you are under no obligation to attend Mass, when you enter our church buildings you are accepting the risk that comes with public gatherings.

Second, sanitizer and masks will be used. Masks will be required for all who are in attendance, except for the clergy while they are in the sanctuary. I know that masks have are a sensitive issue, however, according to the norms of the Archdiocese of Hartford, masks will be required. Masks will not be available at the church, please bring your own. Hand sanitizer will be available at the entrance to the church, you are expected to use it on entering. Additionally, you may bring your own in order to sanitize your hands an additional time before receiving Holy Communion. The pews and commonly used surfaces will be wiped down before every Mass. Gloves are not required. Additionally, gloves may *not* be worn to receive Holy Communion.

Third, the number of people allowed in the church buildings is restricted to 100 people in Harwinton and 75 people in New Hartford. Entrance to the church will be on a "*first come, first served*" basis. If capacity has been reached, you may be asked to stay outside. This is not personal, it just means the Church is full. If the number of people trying to attend Mass cannot be accommodated for the first week or two, then a reservation system will be established.

Fourth, access to the church will be through only one set of doors. For Immaculate Conception, this will be through the bell tower doors with the ramp. For Immaculate Heart of Mary, this will be through the main entrance by the parking lot. All other doors will be kept locked. The inside of the church will be marked for social distancing. Every other pew will be closed and every pew will be divided into two sections. Unless you traveled in the same car or live together, everyone must stay in separate sections. This will mean that your favorite seat or even section of the church may be closed or occupied, please be understanding.

Fifth, Holy Communion will be distributed by the priest and, if present, a deacon. The minister of communion will wear a mask and sanitize his hands prior to distributing communion. Please leave six

feet in between each communicant, with the exception of small children. To receive Holy Communion, you will remove your mask after receiving the host. It is highly encouraged to receive Holy Communion on the hand. For those who prefer to receive on the tongue, I ask that you wait to receive after those receiving on the hand. I will have hand sanitizer available in case my fingers come in contact with anybody. Please be patient and reverent, with care everyone can safely receive Holy Communion. Accidents only happen if we rush. Please note, that no one is under any obligation to receive Holy Communion at Mass – it is not a requirement for public worship. It is of immense spiritual benefit to join yourself to the sacrifice of Christ on the altar.

Finally, Masses will follow the normal weekend schedule beginning on July 4th: 5:00 pm on Saturday and 9:30 am on Sunday at Immaculate Heart of Mary and 8:00 am and 11:30 am on Sunday at Immaculate Conception. The doors to the church will be opened at least 15 minutes before the start of Mass once the building has been cleaned and set up.

In addition, the Sacrament of Reconciliation will be available on Saturdays from 3:30 to 4:45 at Immaculate Heart of Mary Church. I look forward to taking the next step to resume our worship together.

God Bless you and Stay Well!

Rev. Michael A. Ruminski
Pastor, Our Lady of Hope