

Good People of Good Counsel,

State and local authorities recently issued guidelines for the opening up of our society, and that includes the ability to responsibly gather together as a parish for Mass. While I am very excited about this wonderful news, I spent much of the last week gathering information on all the civil guidelines and restrictions that have been put forth to mitigate the possibility of spreading the Coronavirus and developing a plan for how we as a parish can best follow those guidelines.

This letter will outline our plan, and also serve to clarify many of the questions that have been sent to me as your pastor.

The most frequently asked question I've had is if there would be a sign-in sheet at the parish. Initially, the Mayor was going to require all businesses and other places where people would gather to record the names of everyone who visited for more than 10 minutes, and those names would need to be turned over upon request. Thankfully, that has been amended from being required, to being merely recommended. I will not be keeping any records of people who attend religious services, nor will I violate your fundamental privacy by sharing with any third-party organization those who are exercising their religious freedom by worshiping at Good Counsel.

Beginning on May 16<sup>th</sup>, we are allowed to gather for Mass with an unrestricted number of people in the church as long as each household is spaced six feet apart from every other household. I measured out the pews and calculated how many people we can hold with everyone being safely spaced from everyone else. The good news is that we can fit everyone that normally comes to Good Counsel for Mass (with a few extra spaces for non-parishioners) if we add a Sunday Mass to our schedule.

For this temporary period of time, I have adjusted our Sunday Mass schedule in an effort to best accommodate everyone who would like to come.

The new (temporary) Mass schedule at Good Counsel will be:

**Saturday Vigil:** 4pm

**Sunday:** 8am, 10am, and Noon.

Those who are showing symptoms of Coronavirus should not come to Mass. You are also not obligated to come to Mass during this time as the Bishop has dispensed with that obligation during this ongoing public health crisis. Use your best judgment and be responsible regarding your health and the health of others. If you are not comfortable coming to Mass or being in public, you are under no obligation to come at this time.

For those who would like to come to Mass, here is how we are going to make it work: all of our parishioners will be assigned one of the Sunday Masses to attend. Everyone will also be assigned a specific seat within the church. Under the current spacing conditions, this is the only way that we will be able to organize ourselves to ensure that everyone who wants to attend Mass is able to do so.

In order to successfully reserve your space at Mass, I ask that you fill out the following online Google form. Here is the link to it: <https://forms.gle/FFapASBFQJXSjsKs5>

In the Google form, you will be asked a series of questions about the total number of people in your household; if anyone in your household requires a low-gluten host; and if you have any sons that you want to continue being an altar server at Mass. In the form, you will also be able to express your preference for which Mass time you would prefer to come to. I will do my best to accommodate everyone's preferred choices.

Once all of our registered parishioners have secured a space in the church, then we will open up any remaining spaces to non-parishioners. The Mass time and space assigned in the church will remain yours moving forward. You will not have to complete this form every week, but just the one time. If there are any future Sunday Masses where you know in advance that you will not be present, please let us know so we can utilize the space for someone else for that particular weekend. The space remains yours in the future even if you are unable to attend on a particular Sunday.

If you have any specific questions about your seating situation, or the new mass schedule, you can send them to [ourladyofgoodcounselkc@gmail.com](mailto:ourladyofgoodcounselkc@gmail.com). The above email is only being used for the Coronavirus mass schedule/seating chart.

One note about the Sunday schedule: after each Mass there will be a few minutes of time to make a prayer of Thanksgiving. Shortly thereafter, we will ask you to exit the church. We will need for the church to be completely emptied so that we can do a full cleaning before the next Mass begins. To thoroughly clean the church, it will take about 30 minutes. If you arrive early for your Mass and the doors of the church are still shut, it means cleaning is still being done. Our ushers will be there to help let you know when you can come in and direct you to your seating area.

I am grateful for your patience and understanding as we look to work out this new system and Mass schedule.

I received several emails regarding the wearing of masks and was able to get some clarification from the Diocese on what is being recommended. It is recommended that parishioners wear masks from their car into the church, and once they arrive at their pew for Mass, the masks can be removed (you can also keep them on if you prefer). You can then reapply your masks at the end of Mass when exiting the church. The CDC also advises that small children should not wear masks.

I am required to wear a mask when distributing Holy Communion, but not for the rest of Mass. I am grateful to the Carlisle family for sewing Fr. Mattingly and myself some stylish religious themed masks to wear.

Regarding the distribution of Holy Communion: for the most part, this will continue as it always has with either a priest or deacon being the minister of Holy Communion. The one thing that will look different is that instead of coming up to the Communion rails in front of the Mary and St. Joseph altars, you will remain in your pew and the priest or deacon will come to you. You can receive kneeling in your pew just as you would at the Communion rail.

Instead of our normal collection (with ushers going through the pews with baskets) there will be a table in the back of the church where you can drop off your envelope / contribution. The ushers will keep an eye on these baskets and make sure all the contributions get to the parish safe to be counted as normal. Second collections will be marked by separate baskets on that

same table. I am extremely grateful for all the continued giving that has occurred during this period when we were unable to have public liturgies. Many households mailed in their envelopes and we saw an increase in online giving. Thank you for your extraordinary generosity during these uncertain times.

Our daily Mass schedule will resume the morning of Saturday, May 16th, with Mass at 9am and confessions beforehand. Our daily noon Mass will resume on Monday, May 18th with confessions before each Mass. For daily Masses, there are no assigned spaces, but we ask that everyone self-govern by keeping themselves six feet apart. The pews will be marked with little cards that will help to show you six feet spacing. Communion for daily Mass will occur at the Communion rail in front of Mary's altar.

Confessions will continue to be heard near the St. Joseph altar until we are safely able to return to our beautiful confessional. When confessing, please remember that your voice might carry and to speak in a low, clear voice. Please also keep an appropriate distance when in line for confession.

While things will continue to be different for a while moving forward, I am very happy to be able to celebrate Mass with you again. These days have presented all of us with various challenges. I am confident that the Lord will continue to pour out His grace upon us during this joyful season of Easter. In your goodness, please continue to pray for me as your pastor. Our Lady of Good Counsel is a special place, and I am grateful to Bishop Johnston for this wonderful assignment.

In Christ and Mary,  
Fr. Johnson