

**RE-OPENING DIRECTIVES FOR  
HIGHWAY 60 CATHOLIC CLUSTER OF ASHTON, SHELDON AND SIBLEY  
PHASE 1 – LIMITED ATTENDANCE**

I am writing to prepare you for the return to public Masses. It is not going to be a “normal” return and we do not know how long these protocols will be in place. Please read carefully the following protocols and procedures that will be in place when we do reopen our Churches. Please be patient and respect the intent of these protocols to keep people safe and avoid spreading the coronavirus. It is each person’s responsibility to do his/her part for the sake of the protection of others – even if one might not agree with these protocols.

These Directives follow the **INSTRUCTIONS FOR RESUMING THE PUBLIC CELEBRATION OF MASS** as issued by Bishop Nickless on 14 May 2020.

**Limited opening of our parishes for private prayer in front of the Blessed Sacrament.**

- Starting the week of June 15, St. Patrick and St. Andrew will be open for private prayer.
  - **This is not Adoration**, it is private prayer.
  - Every Wednesday from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m.
  - Only 10 people will be allowed into the church at one time.
  - We are asking parishioners to limit their time to 1 hour so that others may enter the church to pray.
- You do not have to stay the full hour. You may only need 10, 15 or 30 minutes. This is your choice.
  - If after 1 hour, others want to come in, those that have been in the church for an hour, will be asked to leave to let others in.
  - There will be a monitor at both St. Patrick and St. Andrew. This will allow for spacing for social distancing.
  - You are required to wear a mask to enter the church.
  - **Cleansing and sanitizing** protocols will be followed after the time for private prayer.

**STARTING THE WEEKEND OF JUNE 27 AND 28, 2020**

1. **Dispensation.** All the faithful are to be reminded that the obligation to attend Sunday Mass is still dispensed. This dispensation continues through the end of the year 2020. The elderly and more vulnerable/high risk parishioners should be reminded that because of this, it is not a mortal sin to miss Sunday Mass, even though it is being offered, and that it is preferable that they remain home at this time.  
**All persons over age 65 and all with underlying health issues are highly encouraged NOT to attend public Masses at this time.**
2. **Parishioners are not to attend public Mass who are**
  - a. at a higher risk
  - b. caretakers of those at risk
  - c. are not feeling well
  - d. have a high fever, cough, difficulty breathing, and showing symptoms of COVID-19
  - e. child/children under the age of 2 years (because a child under the age of 2 is unable to wear a mask) or if you have a child that is unable to wear a mask

3. No Public Masses will be held if the pastor is quarantined due to contact with someone who has tested positive with COVID-19 or is ill with the disease. Substitute and retired priests will NOT be called to preside at the Mass.
4. If **flare-ups of the virus** should occur locally or regionally, public Mass may be cancelled at a moment's notice.
5. The restriction against so-called "parking lot Masses" and "drive-thru confessions" remains in force.
6. Sufficient **cleaning and sanitizing** materials [certified and approved for COVID-19] will be on hand.
7. Arrangements for **cleaning/sanitizing the church** between Masses will be in place.
8. **All Ushers, Readers, and Eucharistic Ministers Of Holy Communion** are to be under the age of sixty five [65].
9. **Ushers** will be trained on how to greet/welcome, seat people, take attendance and dismiss attendees.
10. **Ushers will** assist with cleaning and sanitizing between the English and Spanish Mass in Sheldon. Janitors will take care of cleaning and sanitizing after Mass in Ashton and Sibley and after the Spanish Mass in Sheldon.
11. **The Church doors will open** thirty [30] minutes before Mass and which time the entry doors will be blocked open to avoid everyone from touching the door handles. If we are unable to block open the doors, an usher will hold the door open as people enter the church.
12. **Entry into church will be restricted** to one door at the main entrance. This will be the south entrance of both Ashton and Sibley and the North entrance at Sheldon.
13. **Facemasks** are required to be worn by all adults and children over the age of two [2] in addition to the required with social distancing as these both work in tandem to curb coming into contact with the respiratory droplets that are emitted from the nose and mouth, which in turn introduces viral contamination in the building. Persons over age two unable to wear a facemask will not be admitted. The presider will not wear a facemask during Mass. The presider and all ministers assisting with Holy Communion will each wear a facemask. The Lector may remove their mask while proclaiming the word.
  - a. Gloves give a false sense of security. According to the CDC and the WHO, touching a surface that is contaminated or otherwise coming into contact with the virus with your hands does not result in contagion, contagion takes place when we then touch our face. Once contaminated, gloves transfer the virus just as effectively as unwashed hands and the CDC says that the only reason to wear gloves is if doing so reminds the wearer not to touch their face.
14. **No holy water, song books,** or other printed materials will be provided, as these create the chance for spreading the virus. **Please do not bring materials or books with you to Mass.**
15. **Hand sanitizer** station will be at the church entrance and everyone entering is **REQUIRED** to sanitize properly sanitize their hands.
16. **A collection basket** or box will be placed near the entrance. We do encourage people to continue sending their tithing via mail or ACH or online.
17. **No gloves** are to be worn.
18. **Seating for Ashton and Sibley**
  - a. Will be on a first-come-first-served basis and will start from the front pew and work to the back pew.

- b. Pews will be marked for those to be used and those not to be used. There will be an open pew, two closed pews, an open pew, etc. All pew cushions will be removed.
- c. Attendees will be seated in accord with **social distancing** guidelines – individuals (1), husband/wife (2), and family units (a family unit is only the family members who permanently live in the same home) must sit six (6) feet apart in each pew. The Ushers will take care of appropriate seating.
  - 1. **Ashton** on the East and West sides, the pews can hold an individual (1) on each end, one couple (2) or an individual (1) on the ends or a family unit.
  - 2. **Ashton** in the main body of the church, the pews can hold the following
    - i. One individual (1), six (6) foot distance, one individual (1), six (6) foot distance and one individual (1) or
    - ii. One individual (1), six (6) foot distance and a couple (2) or
    - iii. A couple (2), six (6) foot distance and a couple (2) or
    - iv. A family unit.
  - 3. **Sibley** pews can hold the following
    - i. One individual (1) six (6) foot distance and one individual (1) or
    - ii. One individual (1) and one couple (2) or
    - iii. One family unit
- d. **Pews** will be marked for those to be used and those not to be used with an open pew, two closed pews, an open pew, etc. All pew cushions from pews to be used will be removed.

**19. Seating in Sheldon**

- a. Reservations will be taken for Masses each weekend – at least for a while. This will allow to plan for seating arrangements at each Mass. You can call the church office at 712-324-0160 to make your reservation. Reservation cut off is at 12 noon on Friday for the coming weekend Mass.
  - b. With a map, Ushers will seat parishioners accordingly with the six (6) foot social distancing guidelines.
  - c. If you have not made a reservation and still wish to attend Mass, you will only be allowed in the church if there is available room.
- 20.** You will only use the main entrance of the church to enter. The side doors will remain locked.
- 21. When seating is full** the church will be closed and ‘late-comers’ turned away.
- 22.** All church buildings are equipped with **panic bars** and thus in case of an emergency, all persons may safely exit the building even though the doors are locked.
- 23.** Please remain in your pew during Mass after you have been seated. There will be no moving about the Church. Please use the restroom at home before you come to Mass. **Bathrooms** will be off limits and closed at this time [unless there is an emergency need] in order to control the spread of COVID-19 in this highly infectious area of the church.
- 24.** The **only person permitted in the sacristy** is the presiding priest. If other clergy are present, they must distance themselves in the sacristy, when possible. There will be no Altar Servers.
- 25.** There will be **no entrance, offertory, or recessional processions** at Mass—except for the distribution of Holy Communion.

26. **Music/singing will be limited** as this activity can spread germs even further than regular speaking. A cantor can be used. An organist may be permitted for the limited singing and for instrumental music when people are entering and exiting.
27. There will be **no sign of peace**.
28. **HOLY COMMUNION will be distributed to the faithful after the conclusion of Mass.**
  - a. Ushers will dismiss pews so people may approach the minister in single file at proper social distance
    1. Individuals – six [6] feet from the next individual, husband/wife, family unit
    2. Husband/wife - six [6] feet from the next individual, husband/wife, family unit
    3. Family unit - six [6] feet from the next individual, husband/wife, family unit
  - b. It is strongly suggested that communion be **received only in the hand**.
  - c. The Minister[s] of Holy Communion will **sanitize** his/her hands immediately before the distribution of communion and will be wearing a facemask.
  - d. **Communicant must remain as far as possible from the Minister of Holy Communion while wearing a facemask**, yet close enough for the Minister to place the host in the wide-open hand without touching the communicant's hand.
  - e. If the Minister touches the communicant's hand, the Minister will pause to **sanitize** his/her hand.
  - f. **The communicant will**
    1. **step aside**
    2. **carefully temporarily remove their facemask**
    3. **receive the host**
    4. **replace the facemask**
    5. **exit the church** at the nearest exit. Ushers will guide you to the nearest exit.
    6. **Depart immediately to their vehicle**
  - g. Individuals, husband/wife, and family unit are encouraged to spend some **quiet prayer time** in their vehicle before departing.
  - h. **No one is permitted to socialize** with other individuals, husbands/wives, and/or family units before or after Mass in the church, in the parking lot, or on parish property.
29. **Violations of these directives** could result in:
  - a. **the removal** of the offender[s]
  - b. **the postponement or cancellation** of the Mass to begin
  - c. **the cancellation** of future Masses until further notice
30. **Cleansing and sanitizing** protocols will be followed after each Mass.
31. **Other Parish Activities**
  - a. The public celebration of daily Masses will remain suspended.
  - b. **Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament will remain suspended.**
  - c. **Special parish events and liturgies will remain suspended.**
  - d. **Any activities that precede or follow Mass remain suspended.**
  - e. Confessions will continue to be heard by appointment only.
  - f. Communion visits to the homebound, care facilities, and hospitals will remain suspended, except in danger of death.
  - g. **The Highway 60 Catholic Cluster Bulletin** is available on the websites at <http://sheldonstpats.org/> for Sheldon and <http://www.hwy60catholiccluster.org/site/> for Ashton and Sibley. You can also find the bulletin at <https://parishesonline.com/find/saint-andrew-church-saint-mary-church>.

h. Feel free to contact the Parish Office with any questions or concerns you may have.

**32. Liturgical Ministers**

a. If you are 65 and older and healthy, you can volunteer at your discretion.

**STARTING JULY 6, WATCH THE BULLETIN, WEBSITE AND THE PARISH APP OR CALL THE OFFICE FOR CONTINUED UPDATES.**

As with everything during this time of COVID19, the guidelines are subject to change as needed.

To make sure that you are can be contacted on short notice of any changes, please contact the office at St. Patrick 712-324-0160 or St. Andrew and St. Mary 712-754-2739 with your contact information.

**Summer Office Hours**

St. Patrick Office Hours are Monday – Friday 8:30 a.m. – 12 p.m. Please call the office to have the alley door opened for your visit. This will allow Amy to open the door.

St. Patrick School Office Hours are Monday – Thursday 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.

St. Andrew/St. Mary Office Hours are Monday – Thursday 8 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Fr. Siby - 712-730-6480.


**IN OUR LONGING TO RETURN TO MASS**, we need to remember that it is not only about us individually, but it is about everyone attending and those unable to attend. We all make up the Body of Christ.

We are going to be faced with many rules and guidelines. For some, they may seem extravagant; but to others, they may seem not enough. Having to keep our social distance, wearing a mask or how we receive communion could all be issues. If you don't like these rules—or the lack of rules—put in place by our Church leaders, it is OK. It is OK, too, to express your concerns with Bishop Nickless, Fr. Siby or the office. Calm communication and discussion is healthy and welcome.

Our church leaders have worked hard to be ready when we once again open the church doors and have people attend Mass. Our primary concern is the health and protection of everyone attending Mass. Have patience and respect. Be understanding to those around you.

As Catholics, we should lead with charity and humility.

Please know I continue to pray for you and your families during this time of pandemic.

  
Fr. Siby Punnoose  
Pastor