



June 22, 2020

My dear parishioners,

We can finally see some light at the end of the tunnel.

Mayor Bowser has presented her plans for reopening our churches. I commend her. She has not rushed the process or made a hasty decision. She has worked with her team which includes experienced health officials. She put the health of the people of Washington, DC ahead of personal opinion.

We recognize the importance of reopening our churches, but also the reality that we cannot yet eliminate the risk of infection from Covid-19. Mayor Bowser has worked on a balanced plan. The seriousness of this pandemic dictates that we follow the guidelines and safety measures given by our local authorities and health officials, and the Archdiocese of Washington. Therefore, please understand that the logistics and schedule required to offer public Masses under these guidelines will be different from those in place the last time you attended Mass. Your patience, understanding and cooperation are appreciated.

My staff and I have been studying the guidelines and possible safety measures. We have developed a plan that takes into account your desire to celebrate Mass in the Cathedral, while aiming to protect your health and facilitate a smooth reopening. The reopening date has been set for Sunday, June 28.

General

1. We look forward to celebrating the Eucharist with our dear parishioners both safely and joyfully!

2. Our temporary Mass schedule beginning on Sunday, **June 28** is as follows:

Sunday:	7am (English), 10am (English), 1pm (Spanish) and 5:30pm (English)
Monday – Friday:	12:10pm
Saturday:	8am

3. Even with the resumption of public liturgies, please be aware that **the dispensation from the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation remains in effect.**

Parishioners who are particularly vulnerable (e.g., over the age of 60, those with heart or lung conditions, diabetes, or who are immune-compromised), and those who are ill or suspect they may be ill, should remain at home. Livestreaming of our principal Sunday Masses on the Cathedral YouTube channel (www.youtube.com/c/cathedralofstmatthewtheapostle) will continue, with Masses at **10am** in English and **1pm** in Spanish.

4. **Social distancing while entering into and while in the Cathedral is required**, with approximately 6 feet of separation between persons, except for members of the same family or household within the same pew. Social distancing will reduce the numbers of the faithful that can be accommodated in the Cathedral. Mayor Bowser has set a limit of 100 persons. To comply, every other pew will be roped off. Subject to the exception for members of the same family or household, the middle section pews will seat up to three persons each, the pews in the side sections in the front will seat up to two persons each, and the small pews just outside the chapels will seat only one person each. **Once we reach our capacity of 100, additional worshippers will not be able to enter the Cathedral.**

Additional Preparations and Precautions

5. Hymnals, missalettes, and holy water have been removed from the Cathedral. All other materials in the pew racks have been removed as well.

6. **Hand sanitizers will be available as you enter the Cathedral as well as in Communion lines, in both cases offered by the guides.**

7. Doors will be propped open before and after Mass to avoid unnecessary contact with door handles and push bars and to increase ventilation. **One door at the main entrance and the door at the base of the driveway will be used for entry**, and the middle doors at the main entrance will be opened and available for exit. The door at the alley is to be used only for emergency but will be open for exit.

8. **Restrooms across from the East Conference Room will be open for use only in necessity.** Use the door next to the organ to access them. The restroom must be sanitized after each use.

9. The number of liturgical ministers present at Mass will be limited, with the exception of the guides to assist with seating, Communion and departure.

10. The following additional precautions that were put in place prior to the suspension of public Masses remain in place: **priests and other Eucharistic ministers will use hand sanitizer to cleanse hands before and after Holy Communion**; there will be no distribution of the Precious Blood; Eucharistic vessels will be washed with hot water and soap after each use; and there will be no Offertory procession.

11. **There will be no passing of the basket at the Offertory.** There will be baskets for Offertory donations as you leave, at the main doors and the doors near the organ and alley. Please consider using FaithDirect at <https://membership.faithdirect.net/enroll/DC284> (Church code DC284), or PayPal (which includes a debit/credit card option and can be accessed using the QR code on the Mass program if there is one, or at www.stmatthewscathedral.org/support).

12. Pews and other surfaces will be sanitized between Masses. **The Cathedral will be closed to the public during sanitizing.** Obviously, the sanitizing requires time and effort and therefore affects the schedule of Masses.

Your Preparations

13. **Worshippers are asked to wear a face mask and to keep it on during Mass, removing it only to receive Holy Communion**, as explained in number 19., and replacing it afterward.

14. You can find daily and Sunday Mass readings online at www.usccb.org and a Sunday Mass program on our website homepage at www.stmatthewscathedral.org.

Participating at Mass

15. As you enter, a guide will offer hand sanitizing. **Please sanitize your hands before taking a seat.** Please follow the direction of the guides and fill in seats from the front pews (near the sanctuary) to the back.

16. At first, we will not encourage congregational singing; **only the cantor (with a mask) will sing. We will ask that all others join silently, singing in their hearts.**

17. The following precautions for worshippers that applied prior to the suspension of public Masses remain in place: **refrain from shaking hands during the Sign of Peace** (the invitation to exchange a sign of peace is now omitted); and refrain from holding hands during the Lord's Prayer.

18. Those who do not wish to receive Communion may make an Act of Spiritual Communion.

19. **For the Communion procession, follow the direction of the guides.** Those in the pew sections to the right (east) of the center aisle, will exit their pew section to the right at the direction of the guide. Those in the pew sections on the left will exit to the left. A guide will meet you and offer you the hand sanitizer for your hands. Always remain 6 feet behind the person in front of you. Follow the markers on the floor. As you approach the Eucharistic minister, keep the mask on, extend your hand, and remain at a safe distance. After the Eucharistic minister says, "The Body of Christ," and you respond, "Amen," then receive the host in your hand. Step a few feet away from the minister, loosen your mask, consume the host, and replace the facial covering. Then return to your pew.

20. It is strongly recommended that all receive Communion in the hand. Out of love for our brothers and sisters, and out of kind concern for the vulnerable and our Eucharistic ministers, **those who normally receive on the tongue are respectfully asked to consider receiving in the hand as a temporary measure.**

21. **Dismissal will be pew by pew.** The middle sections will begin with pews at the back (closest to the main entrance) as signaled by the guides, and ending with the front pews. Exit through the main doors. The front side pews will exit via the door by the organ or via the alley door. Please follow the directions of the guides. **Offertory donations may be made as you depart.** Please exit promptly so we may begin sanitizing the Cathedral for the next liturgy. Bulletins will not be distributed; see our website for the latest news and information (www.stmatthewscathedral.org). Much to our personal regret, we priests will not be able to greet you as you leave. As you leave, please keep socially distanced from other persons.

Other public liturgies, such as Holy Hours, will be celebrated in the Cathedral as announced on the Cathedral website at www.stmatthewscathedral.org. Confessions will continue to be heard by appointment in the North Conference Room. Call the parish office at 202-347-3215 to make an appointment, leaving your phone number for us to return your call. Social distancing will be maintained for Confession. To get to the North Conference Room, enter through the door at the base of the driveway to the parking garage.

When we gather for Mass on Sunday, June 28, it is important for all of us to understand that things will not immediately “go back to normal.”

Please keep in mind that we will all experience challenges and frustration as we navigate these weeks and months ahead.

Let us continue to keep those sick and infected afflicted with COVID-19, those on the front lines caring for the sick, those who have died as a result of the virus, and all of our fellow parishioners and parishes in our prayers in these days ahead.

I want to express my gratitude to those who have continued to give their monthly/weekly donation to the Cathedral. I am so very grateful. You keep us going. You make a real difference. Muchas gracias!!

I miss you all. I have missed your smiles, hugs, and your many kindnesses. I hope at least to see you soon at Mass. You know how to reach me. Just give me a call or an email (rjameson@stmatthewscathedral.org). Please stay safe.

May the peace of the Risen Christ be with you always.

Your brother in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "W. Ronald Jameson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rev. Msgr. W. Ronald Jameson
Rector