

Dear Friends,

As we consider our re-opening, as I said before, the health and safety of everyone is our top priority. It will seem awkward and a bit strange at first. I ask for your patience as we try to keep people safe and provide limited access to the sacraments.

I thank all of you who have volunteered to provide hospitality and cleaning for when the church building is open. I appreciate your willingness to help out. To begin, we will take it slow. If it works well, and we have adequate volunteers, we potentially could expand the hours that the church is open. We sent the certification form to the archdiocese after all of our training and preparation was completed, which I'm happy to say has been approved.

Our plan is to have the church open for private prayer and the sacrament of reconciliation on Saturday afternoons from 3pm-5pm, beginning on June 6. Current regulations from the archdiocese limit the number of worshippers to 10 people. All people who come into church must enter and exit from Webster Avenue and wear a mask or face covering. We have added markings on the floor indicating proper social distancing. A certain number of pews have been designated for personal prayer; an usher will guide you to your spot. If there are people waiting to enter the church, the time will be limited to 20 minutes to allow everyone an opportunity to pray. At this time, I do not foresee having a "ticket" system, but if we have an issue with crowd control, we may have to implement one.

At this time, we can also only celebrate baptisms, weddings and funerals, with these same limits and adaptations. We have been in touch with those who had previously scheduled these celebrations to reschedule them. "Phase 2" from the archdiocese will allow for public masses on weekdays and Sundays. We have not received any indication as to when that might happen, or what the guidelines would be. The parish staff and I are beginning to work on having a plan that we could implement when this permission is granted. Again, I ask for your patience as we are deliberate about opening up and wanting to do it right.

I also will be reaching out to parish leadership to engage you in the conversation about reopening the building and parish offices. Thank you for all that you have been doing during this time. I know that it has been difficult for many of you, but I truly believe that our faith community can emerge from this stronger than before. I have a great hope that our parish and church is on the cusp of a great change that will make us more dynamic and focused on mission.

Today is the 10th anniversary of my ordination to the priesthood which took place here at St. Vincent de Paul. I want to thank all of you for helping me be a better priest and pastor over the years. While I didn't imagine marking this anniversary in our current context, you have been a blessing to me in countless ways. I am so blessed to be able to walk with you on your journeys of faith and encourage you to continue to grow in your faith, as you have done so for me. Thank you again and may God continue to bless you.

In St. Vincent,

Fr. Jeremy

PS: Some of you have asked for an update on my sister. Her stem cell transplant went well last week and thus far has had minimal side effects (thanks be to God!) We are now waiting for the stem cells to engraft in her bone marrow and begin to produce healthy blood cells. This process will be at least another week. Thank you again for your continued prayers.