

OLMC Faith Family,

My prayer is that you and all you love are blessed with good health and let us continue to pray for all who are struggling in any way. As you may have seen, Bishop Pates recently published the plan for re-opening churches of the Diocese of Joliet. To wit:

Phase One allowing of celebrations of Baptism, Reconciliation, Weddings, and Funerals with a limit of ten attendees.

Phase One-A allowing the re-opening of church doors for private prayer and Adoration with the ten attendee limit.

Phase Two allowing resumption of weekday and weekend Masses for larger groups depending on the guidelines issued by the State of Illinois at a later date, and the capacity of our church facility considering safe spacing.

The OLMC Re-opening Plan

First, it is important for everyone to understand that our design will prioritize the safety and well-being of all while honoring due respect and reverence for the sacraments and our Catholic norms.

I have called together a Parish Re-Opening Leadership Team and will appoint captains to guide our effort. That Leadership Team has already participated in required training offered by the Diocese to ensure that our parish plan conforms to the guidelines developed by the Diocese in collaboration with civil and healthcare authorities. We have begun to obtain the protective and cleaning supplies needed.

Volunteers Needed

This I consider the most crucial part of this letter. We are inviting as many parishioners as can step forward to assist with the various aspects of our parish re-opening. Specifically, we seek those who are under the age of 65 and not of the “vulnerable population.” I am especially encouraging high school and college age parishioners as well as young adults to step up and answer the call to assist in this essential effort. We need you to help in one of the following capacities:

Set-Up. Duties will include ensuring that all necessary supplies for each sacramental celebration/gathering are ready for use and that entrances and exits are clearly marked to assist the congregants.

Greeting. Admittance of worshippers and welcoming our guests. Helping to guide the flow of people, making sure that attendees use hand sanitizer, are wearing a mask, and directing worshippers to appropriate seating spaces.

Cleaning. Maintaining and cleaning trafficked and occupied areas of the church before and after each liturgy.

The Leadership Team will help in making sure that all volunteers are properly trained and ready.

And we will be looking for individuals at each Mass time to step up into a leadership role in each of the three above-described categories.

To respond to this appeal for volunteers, please contact:

Fr Mike at fmike.okeefe@ourladyofmtcarmel.org

Sue Haa, our parish secretary, at receptionist@ourladyofmtcarmel.org

Mary Prebys, our Youth Minister, at mary.prebys@ourladyofmtcarmel.org

Or call the parish office 8am-4:30pm at 630 852 3303

Timing for Our Re-Opening

The parish Re-Opening Leadership Team is in the process of reviewing and completing the steps prescribed to all parishes as part of the re-opening certification process to be approved by the Diocese. I am confident that we can accomplish all of the tasks necessary to be approved for Phases 1 and 1A in the next couple of weeks. We must move at a pace that we deem appropriate to have all of the stipulations in place and sufficient volunteers on board. Again, the need for voluntary parishioner assistance cannot be overstated.

Making a prognostication as to when we will be able to resume weekend Masses with an increased number of attendees admitted is more difficult to assess. First, we are dependent on approval from the Governor's office. Secondly, to have permission to proceed from the Bishop's office, we must complete all the protocols of a process we have never been through before. We are working at it.

Another issue of which I would like to make you aware is that, when we are able to resume, we will have to limit the number of persons admitted for a given Mass. One of the tasks of the Leadership Team will be to design some form of a registration for admittance ahead of time so that we can avoid turning people away at the doors and consequent hard feelings. Limiting the number is necessary to minimize the risk of the spread of disease. Please be alert for the announcement of that procedure and cooperative with it. The guidelines and measures required to re-open are designed to protect the well-being of all with whom we come in contact. Christ taught that we are our brothers' and sisters' keepers. Our collective patience, willingness to help, and the care we take to re-open will be evidence that we have listened to Him.

God's Peace to us all,

Fr Mike