

# Parishioner Guide for Mass with Social Distancing

St. Mary's Catholic Church, Alton, IL

## Overview

We are so excited to share this plan for gathering to worship the Lord, hear the Word of God, and receive the Holy Eucharist for our salvation. Thank you for your patience and cooperation as we abide by the best guidance we are receiving from proper authorities and live out our Catholic identity in these times.

St. Mary's Catholic Church in the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois is complying with state and federal laws and the guidance of the Bishop's office to make it as safe as possible to participate in the sacramental life of the church.

This entails limiting the overall attendance in the church to 25% of our total capacity, and maintaining a 6-foot spacing between households at all times. It also entails aggressive cleaning routines after surfaces have been used by parishioners.

Please follow the directions of our specially-trained ushers to help maintain the safety of the whole congregation. Here are the main points of how to attend Mass at this time:

- Enter the church by the side door (4th Street) or left-most main door (Henry Street), following the instructions of the ushers to be seated in pews. Please maintain 6 feet of clearance around your family as much as possible.
- Masks are not required, although you may prefer to wear a mask until you have arrived in your pew.
- No congregational singing and no contact during the Sign of Peace. Music will still be provided for the Mass.
- Please follow the directions of ushers to come up for Communion and to leave the Church after the final blessing.
- For those not attending Mass in church, Communion will be distributed outside on 4th Street at the conclusion of the 11am Mass until 12:30, presuming that one has watched any livestream of the day's Mass (ours is at 8am).
- You are still not required to attend Sunday Mass, though you should keep the Lord's day holy in some way.

For morning Masses Monday-Saturday, we will attempt to seat only one side of the church for each Mass, so as to reduce the cleaning labor required to prepare for the following Mass.

# Who Should Not Come to Mass

We hope that everyone will be able to attend a Mass in person, however, we also understand that those at **elevated risk** for infection and those who are **already ill** should not come at this time.

If you are running a **fever**, or develop any of the other **symptoms of contagious diseases**, please stay home, watch the Mass online, and make a Spiritual Communion. The dispensation remains in effect that lifts the Sunday obligation to attend Mass.

If you would like to **receive Communion without entering the church building**, please watch the 8am livestream of the Mass in the church (we will discontinue the 9am streaming Mass time in order to return to the normal Mass schedule at St. Mary's). Then come in your car following the 11am Mass to receive Communion at a tent on 4th Street between the Church and rectory. This will be **available from a little before noon until 12:30**.

**Communion for the homebound:** lay ministers must contact Fr. Jeremy in advance to make arrangements.

# Prepare for Mass

Because the entrance procedure is very involved and the between-Mass cleaning must be completed before you can enter the church, we recommend **prayerful preparation for Mass at home and in the car** on the way here. We encourage silence or a well-chosen song, reading the scriptures for the Mass, calling to mind the intentions you will pray for, and any other creative way to prepare your heart and mind to receive the Lord.

For Communion, for those with a **gluten intolerance or allergy** such that you cannot receive the full gluten host or need to receive only from the chalice, you will need to **make arrangements in advance**, preferably during the preceding week when we can get back to you from the office to confirm those arrangements.

# Arrival

**Two entrances** will be available: the 4th street accessible entrance, and the front door on the far left (on Henry Street). The reason is to bring you into the church in an orderly manner and stay within the 25% occupancy limit with social distancing in the church.

Please be patient if **the usher** halts entering that door as we approach capacity. You may still be able to get in as people take their places and any open pews are verified. We have a tiny allowance for overflow seating.

For your convenience, you will find the following on a table inside the entrance:

- **Hand Sanitizer:** Please use it as you enter.
- **Collection baskets:** Thank you for your donations. Baskets will be available at the end of Mass, again, for your convenience.
- **Bulletins:** Please touch only what you intend to take home, and do not leave them behind.

## Restrooms

- Restrooms are available both on the main level and downstairs.
- Please mind the spacing as you wait, and wash your hands thoroughly before returning to your pew.

## Seating

- Please follow the directions of the ushers as you enter an open pew from the side aisle closest to your entrance. That is, the left side for the Henry Street door, and the right side for the 4th Street door.
- Here is what to expect for seating: 6 feet of empty space surrounding each household.
  - Our aisles are less than 6 feet across, so leave a space on the aisle end of your pew to maintain the distancing from the family across the aisle from you.
  - The side sections can only be occupied by a single household of up to 5 people comfortably.
  - The main section pews that are full-length can be occupied by 2 households to a total of three people (a couple of one household and an individual of another), sitting on the ends of the pew. Otherwise, they can seat a single household of up to 7 people comfortably.
  - The main section pews that are shorter can be occupied by two individuals of separate households, each sitting at one end of the pew, or by a single household of up to 6 people comfortably.
- Once you are situated in your pew, you may remove your mask.

## Participation in the Mass

- Please participate in observing all of the gestures, postures, and spoken responses of the Mass as usual. Having said that, there are two key exceptions:
  - We have been instructed to **limit congregational singing** (because this can project more contagious droplets from deeper in the lungs and farther into the air than ordinary speech or breathing). We hope this aspect of the way we pray and worship will soon be restored, as well.

- When it comes time for the **Sign of Peace**, please do so without touching members of other households. Some suggestions are just to make eye contact and say, "Peace be with you," or even to make a reverent bow of the head toward the other person. Contact within your household is certainly permitted.
- Please help us maintain a solemn and reverent celebration, even while we try to stay on schedule, allowing time for Holy Communion, dismissal, and cleaning the church before the next Mass or Baptism.

## Receiving Holy Communion

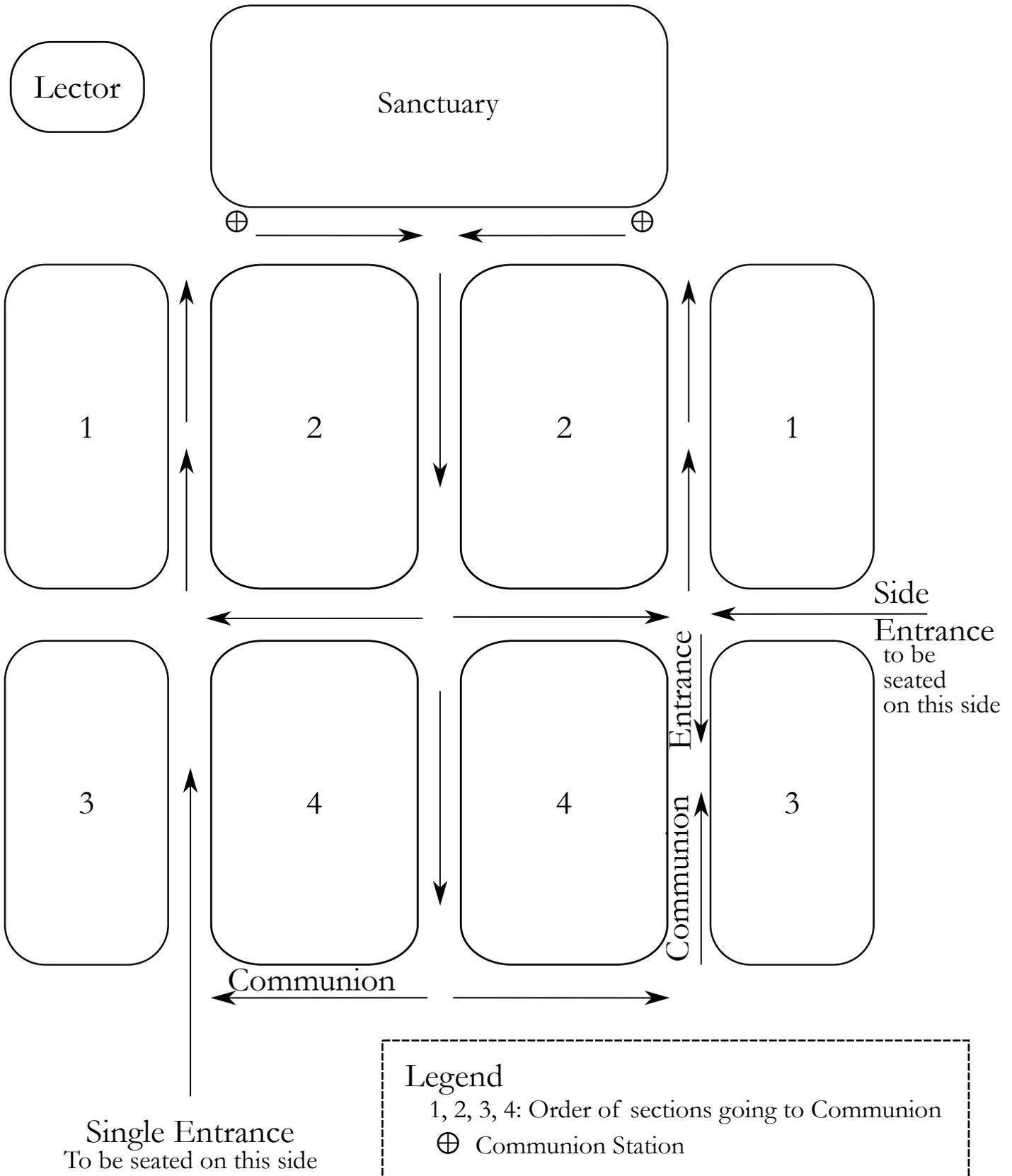
- **Ushers will direct** the Communion procession, releasing a single section of the church at a time to proceed up a side aisle and return down the center aisle.
  - We ask anyone not receiving Communion to remain in the pew (of course, anyone who cannot remain unattended may come forward in the procession as usual).
- You may receive Communion **either on the tongue** (extended to avoid contact with the minister) **or in your hand** (held flat to avoid contact with the minister).
- If applicable, **please lower your mask** when it is your turn to receive communion.
- **No gloves** should be worn to communion (if you are receiving on the tongue, it would be acceptable to keep gloves on).
- This is the order of the sections of the church for Communion, directed by ushers:
  - Side sections, front half
  - Main sections, front half
  - Side sections, back half
  - Main sections, back half

## Dismissal

- Once again, please follow the instructions of the ushers in the aisles to exit the church when it is your turn.
- We will use all aisles and all 5 doors to exit (side door, all Henry Street doors, and downstairs).
- Please proceed down the aisle as directed, and do not linger right outside the church (this helps maintain the distancing as everyone departs and allows space for the people gathering for the next Mass).
- Anyone needing to leave more urgently should get the attention of the usher directing your section of the church.

# St. Mary's Catholic Church, Alton, IL

## Mass with Social Distancing

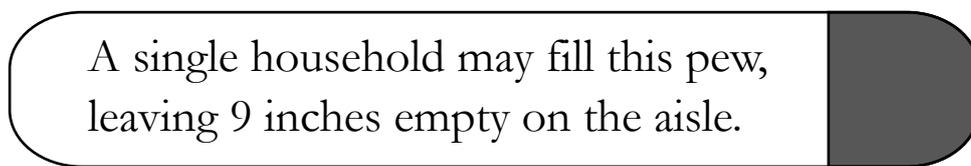


All doors will be used to exit the church, including downstairs

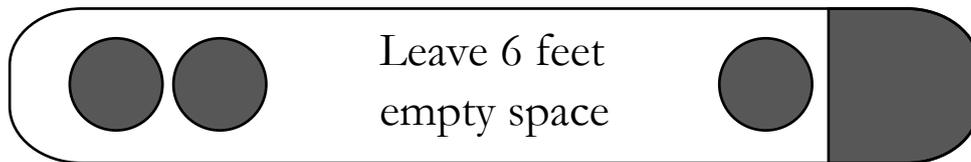
St. Mary's Catholic Church, Alton, IL  
Mass with Social Distancing  
Seating Arrangement

*To maintain the 6 foot distancing between households, we can only seat every 3rd pew, as follows:*

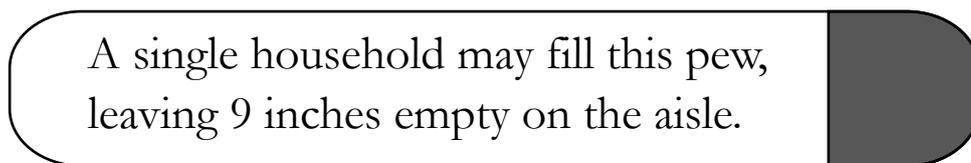
In the **far left and far right wings:**



In the **long pews** of the main section of the church:



OR



In the **short pews** of the main section of the church, we may only seat an individual person on each end or a single household.