

# Welcome Back!

## **PARISH REOPENING:**

As you are all aware, the Archdiocese of San Antonio has recently announced the gradual reopening of Masses beginning on May 19, 2020. We are grateful to have an Archbishop who has done all that he has done during all these circumstances. How wonderful it was for him to fly over several of the areas to show us how He is with us all as we gradually move forward in reopening. I ask that you will continue to pray for him and those who are assisting him in all areas concerning all the parishes in the Archdiocese of San Antonio.

This is an exciting time for the Church and I am very happy and feel blessed to be able to Celebrate Mass once again with our parish community. I have missed you all so very much. We have done our best to keep in touch and stay connected during this time. I am thankful to all of you for checking up on me, for your prayers and your constant support through this time. I am very happy to be part of this blessed family!

As happy as I am and I know you are, it is important to remember that this reopening is going to be gradual and limited as we do our best to follow the guidelines given to us by the State, County and Archdiocese. This is not an easy time for all of us but we will need your understanding, patience and cooperation now more than ever. The health and safety of ALL is our top priority.

By now we hope you have read the guidelines from the Archdiocese. If you have not done so yet please take the time to read it. It is available on our parish website or the Archdiocese of San Antonio website.

As we prepare to gradually welcome back our parish community, I want to thank you for your prayers and patience during this entire transition and pandemic. Please take some time to review and be aware of our plans to celebrate the Masses this weekend. I have asked the staff to help provide information for you so that you will know what to expect when you return.

**SUNDAY MASS OBLIGATION:** As indicated on the guidelines given to us by the Archbishop, it is important to remember, that the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days remains suspended in the Archdiocese during the COVID-19 pandemic. Even as parishes begin to open, if it is in your best interest to remain home due to illness, vulnerability

to illness or the vulnerability of those you care for, you may continue to participate in the liturgy from home.

Those planning on attending should take under consideration their age, health, who they are bringing, or who they may have to care for. It is still recommended and the Archbishop **strongly encourages** those who are **most vulnerable and at risk** to continue to stay home and be safe.

**Who are those?** Anyone 65 and over (*not required but strongly suggested for your safety*), Chronic lung disease, Moderate to severe asthma, Heart Disease, Diabetes, Chronic kidney and liver disease, or Weakened immune system

**\*\*At any age if you are sick, coughing, have a fever or at risk in any way, please stay home and take care.\*\***

**\*\*Anyone who has recently been exposed to the Coronavirus should not be attending a public Mass as it is an act of Christian charity to safeguard the health of others.\*\***

We desire that all of our parishioners remain healthy. We ask that you continue to watch the Mass from home on television or by other media resources that is are made available.

Mass at the San Fernando Cathedral broadcasted:

SUNDAY MASS at 8 AM Televised on KWEX (UNIVISION) -

Channel 8 on Spectrum / Live on Youtube

SUNDAY MASS at 10 AM Televised on CTSA - Channel 15 on Spectrum

Live on Youtube

**CHURCH CAPACITY:** Throughout the Archdiocese the number of persons allowed to enter for Mass is limited that number which can maintain 6ft apart from each other at all times. Due to the restrictions being observed, the number of people allowed to attend each mass will be greatly reduced. This number will be slightly affected each week by the number of individuals, couples or families. We will be following the guidelines to keep all separated 6ft apart. We will not be using all the pews and ushers will be directing those attending to their seats based on our parish seating plan. We are sorry that we will not be able to fit our normal numbers inside for Mass at this time. If we reach the allowed capacity at any Mass, please be understanding if the usher informs you that we cannot take any more into the church. Once the church is full a particular Mass, it's full. You are more

than welcome to attend another Mass, but we cannot exceed the capacity restrictions currently given to us by the Archbishop and other officials. Thank you in advance for your patience and especially for your kindness towards our trained assistants and ushers.

**MASS TIMES:** Beginning May 19, 2020

**Weekday Masses:** Mon-Fri 7:30am

**Saturday Mass:** 5:00 pm (English)

**Sunday Masses:** 9:00am (Spanish) and 11:00am (Bilingual)

\*\*The Church doors will open 30 minutes before each Mass. This will allow for us to sanitize and prepare for all who attend. Please do not arrive before so that we can keep all safe and manage 6ft distancing. Thank You.

## WHAT WILL THIS REOPENING LOOK LIKE FOR OUR PARISH?

**When you arrive:** There will be only one entrance in order to make sure all are wearing masks, all are sanitizing their hands as they enter, to count the number of attendees and to make sure all are directed safely to their seats. It may seem an inconvenience; however, it is out of great care for you that we limit the number of entrances so as to prevent the spread of germs.

The Holy Water in the entrance is still not available; however, it is most appropriate to continue the gesture of making the sign of the Cross when entering the church remembering that we are God's adopted sons and daughters baptized in Christ Jesus in the name of the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit.

Entry for each Mass will be controlled by trained assistants and ushers. Trained Parish Assistants and Ushers will be there to guide you and seat you in the designated areas. The church will be filled starting at the front and going to the back. \*Every other pew will be used to meet safe distancing requirements.

**Masks:** All attending are required to put on your mask before you enter the church, keep them on during Mass and after Mass until arriving back to your vehicles. You will not be permitted to enter without having a Mask on. Masks should be covering the nose and mouth. Anyone over the age of 4 are required to wear a mask. If you do not have a mask and need of one, you may contact the office to receive



Source: HEALTH PROMOTION BOARD

one before this weekend. We have our sewing angels making cloth masks. You may give a donation to the Church for one but it is not necessary.

**Safe Space and Social Distancing:** Social distancing is a must! We know you will be excited to see each other but please no hugging or shaking hands of others when entering. Every other pew will be used for seating and people will need to remain 6ft apart unless you are from the same household. Some areas of the church will be closed off to help with safe distancing and sanitation. The water dispenser has been removed and will not be available during this time. If possible avoid using the bathrooms only if necessary. Thank You.

**No physical contact** during the Lord's Prayer (no holding hands) and the Sign of Peace (no shaking hands). You will also notice that the books in the pews have been removed, presentation of the gifts from the back will not be brought forward and the collection will take place at the end of Mass. While we may not participate in presenting the gifts at the Mass in the usual way, remember that we also make a spiritual offering of the gifts: "accept the offerings You have given us, that we in turn may receive the gift of yourself."

**Offertory:** We are grateful for your faithfulness in stewardship. Weekly offerings will be collected after mass. Each usher stationed at the exit doors will be holding a basket so that you can drop off your offerings. There will be several locations for exiting. Remember, you can also make your offerings online or by dropping it off at the parish office. Thank You.

**Holy Communion:** We will use a single line format while keeping distance between each other for the reception of Holy Communion. Ushers will help guide you. Only Holy Communion will be distributed and it will be received in the hands. Fr. Francois, Deacon Pedro, and any minister assisting will wear masks during distribution of Holy Communion. To receive Communion you must keep your mask on as you approach the priest or minister. Please cup your hands and place one hand resting on the palm of the other when receiving. After responding, "Amen," take a step aside and reverently place the Eucharist in your mouth by lowering your mask to consume the host, and quickly replace your mask after. If you have gloves on, please remove

them prior to the priest placing the Holy Communion in your hand. It is encouraged, if you are able to bring and carry your own individual hand sanitizer to sanitize your hands before receiving Holy Communion.

**Exiting the Church:** Several exits will be available and controlled by the trained ushers. We ask that you follow their instructions for the safety of all attending. We ask that you please exit immediately after Mass and maintain safe distancing at all times. We ask that you **do not** stay to gather in front of the Church, the office and the Church parking lots.

**Cleaning and Sanitizing the Church:** The church will be required to sanitize after each Mass. Pews and other common use areas, including restrooms, will be cleaned and sanitized immediately after each Mass. All are asked to leave and exit as soon as Mass is dismissed, so that our trained team can sanitize the church properly after each Mass as directed. It is important that they have time to sanitize in between masses and prepare the Church for other masses.

**Other Parish Information you may have questions about:**

**Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and Confessions:**

\*\*All attending will be required to wear a mask.

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament will be on Wednesday evenings at 6pm-8pm.

Confessions will be available on Wednesdays at 6:15pm-7:50pm.

Please be mindful of all who are seeking the Sacrament of Reconciliation by observing social distancing and guidelines. No Confessions on Saturday's until further notice.



**What about First Communion and Confirmation:**

Please be patient with us as we try to complete the Sacraments that were scheduled prior to the closing of public masses. We have dates posted for Masses now on our parish website for those who were scheduled to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation. We are currently working on posting dates for Masses for those who were going to receive First Communion this year.

**Group meetings:** All group meetings at the parish are still suspended until further notice.

**Stay Connected:** Check our Parish website: [hfnb.org](http://hfnb.org)

Follow us on Facebook: Holy Family Catholic Church New Braunfels Texas  
(Our Facebook page has the picture of our grotto and our church)

**We're in this together:** There are many working in the background to help make this go smoothly. Please continue to pray for us all. Again, we will need your understanding, patience and cooperation. It is going to take time and it will be done in several phases. Even though we may be limited and restricted by numerous factors we are still trying to serve the needs of our many parishioners during this time. Work with us as we work with the guidelines established by the civil authorities and by our archbishop. It is important to remember that these guidelines are intended for the health and safety of all. Your health and safety is our top priority. We need everyone to do their part in order for us to offer public Masses again. I will continue to keep you updated of any changes that are made.

Let us walk through this together. Let us support each other and our efforts. Let us continue to help others in need. Let us rise above and lift each other's spirits. Continue to pray for the parish and each other. We ask God to continue blessing us as we live our lives with love for Him. May our decisions, our hopes, and our actions reflect His Will here as we slowly re-open for the Celebration of Mass.

Thank you and God bless you and your family always. Jesus, Mary and Joseph pray for us.

Your Pastor and brother in Christ,  
Rev. Ralainirina Francois Rakotovoavy, MSF

