



St. Jerome Church The Beacon on the Boulevard

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December 2, 2020

Dear Friends and Parishioners of St. Jerome,

We hope this letter finds you and your loved ones safe and healthy and peaceful in a time that is full of uncertainty and reasons to be stressed. There are two reasons for this letter. The first is gratitude. The second is to share our plans – as of this moment – for celebrations of the liturgy during the Christmas holiday.

Gratitude:

We are very, very grateful for the support and commitment that all of you have extended to St. Jerome Parish and School during this time of pandemic. Of necessity, we have had to make many adjustments, but your flexibility and cooperation have been helpful and hopeful. School, PSR and pre-sacramental programs all have a new and different shape and feel, yet our mission of spreading and strengthening our faith continues. Weekend liturgies, funerals and baptisms are continuing as well, but in ways that are very different than pre-pandemic times.

We have observed that many people miss church, in two senses of the term. They miss the opportunity to gather for worship because of a suitable abundance of caution. But they also miss the opportunity simply to be with friends and other parishioners. And yet most remain undaunted and stay connected in whatever safe and appropriate ways they can. We are very impressed and grateful for the steady financial support of so many who contribute on-line, at Mass or by dropping an envelope in the mail or in our mailbox. So, despite the uncertainty and stresses, there is much for which we can all be grateful.

Christmas liturgies:

As with every other parish in the diocese, we have wrestled with how to approach our Christmas liturgies. What we are describing in this mailing **is our current plan**. Please know that there are still many uncertainties in this pandemic, so things can change right up to Christmas Eve. It will be important for everyone to be attentive to our website, social media sites and the sign in front of the school for the most up-to-date reports of our plans.

As of this writing, we are planning a slightly different Christmas Eve/Christmas Day schedule than usual. There will be no midnight Mass this year. We will celebrate at 4pm on Christmas Eve and 10 am on Christmas Morning. The protocols we have been following regarding the wearing of masks and social distancing remain in effect and will be even more important going forward.

There will continue to be no congregational singing. The church will be decorated, but a little more modestly than in previous years.

We have been very careful to pray well and to pray safely during this pandemic. In order to continue to do so, participation at Christmas liturgies will be by reservation only. There will be limits on the number of people who can participate in any given liturgy. The reservations will be on a first come, first serve basis. They can be made for individuals as well as for family units, but it will be necessary to have an accurate number of family members who would be attending. We will begin taking reservations on December 8th and will continue to do so until all available seats have been claimed. Please keep an eye on our parish website and bulletin for a link to an app through which you can make your reservation on-line. If you are unable to go online, please call the rectory for assistance. We will also be live-streaming at least one liturgy at Christmas, maybe more. We have purchased the necessary technology to make this possible and will be up and running by the Christmas holiday.

Please note that the dispensation from the obligation to worship on weekends extends to and includes the December 8th holy day (Immaculate Conception) and Christmas Eve/Christmas Day. We strongly encourage everyone to exercise an abundance of caution as you make your decisions about if and how you plan to participate. By exercising this caution, you protect not only yourself but your sisters and brothers in the parish as well.

Last but not least, please remember that this is **our current plan** as of **this moment**. Things can change quickly, so please be attentive. Also, I ask that you share this information with those who might come on the holiday but are not in our parish data bank. No matter how all of this plays out, please continue your dedication and commitment to each other and the parish. Please pray for one another. Be assured of our prayers for you and your loved ones.

To make a reservation for Christmas Eve or Christmas Day Mass go to
<https://parishreservations.com/jeromecleveland>

Have a Blessed Christmas,

Reverend Joseph Fortuna
Administrator Pro Tem

Reverend Francis P. Walsh
Retired in Residence