

Saint Francis & Saint Clare of Assisi Parish

Communities of St. Catherine of Siena Church, St. Mother Teresa of Kolkata Church,
St. Patrick's Church, St. Theresa's Church

June 25, 2020

Dear brothers and sisters,

How are you doing? I am good and I hope you are doing good, too.

I am writing you today because finally I have good news about reopening our churches! Maybe you already heard about it. Last week on Thursday June 18th, the Nova Scotia government made public the decision to allow the reopening of places of worship throughout the Province and make them available up to 50 people with social distancing.

On the same day, our Archbishop Mancini gathered with the pastors, administrators and members of the leadership teams of all the parishes to share the good news and to invite us to start planning the reopening.

The very next day, we received from the Archdiocese the guidelines that we need to put in place to be able to reopen safely our churches, ensuring the highest level of precaution so to reduce as much as possible the risk of contracting the Covid-19 virus.

Since that day, the leadership of our parish and I have been working to the best of our abilities to work out a plan to reopen, applying all the measures indicated by the diocesan guidelines, setting the policies that will apply to our whole parish, and calling on the pastoral teams of our four communities to bring together volunteers to bring all those directions to life.

I am working the best I can with the incredible help of our lay leadership and our clergy to bring us back together to celebrate the Eucharist. It is challenging but totally exciting at the same time.

Unfortunately, we won't be able to reopen this coming weekend, June 27th/28th. We will have to prepare a few more parts of the plan to be ready, which will be hopefully as soon as possible. I am not fond of having to wait a little bit longer, but I want to make sure that our four communities will be able to restart to celebrate Mass on Sunday, all at the same time and with all the required safeguards from the virus.

It is an effort that has been taken on by many faithful volunteers who are helping me, and more will be needed to get to the plan completed. I hope and pray that the Holy Spirit will touch many hearts, so that we will be able to find all the people that we need in these circumstances.

Already several members of our communities have come forward to offer their help, making themselves available to do whatever is needed.

I do appreciate greatly all the work that has been done and all the offers of help that I received. They are wonderful signs of the life of our Parish and of the action of the Holy Spirit in our hearts and in our communities.

I am happy, grateful and proud for all these wonders of love and faith that I am witnessing. As soon as possible I will share with you the information about the time of reopening, the precautions that we will have to implement and the process to be able to register to attend Mass.

We will have to be patient and mindful of complying with all the policies that should ensure our safety from the virus, and everybody else's, too.

Unfortunately the limit of 50 people doesn't allow us to accommodate everybody in the church. Therefore, in collaboration with the leadership team, I decided to have a registration process in place, which is needed in order to keep a record of who is coming to the Church and to reduce the unfairness of just accepting the first 50 people who show up at the Church.

It is going to be a little challenge in the beginning, but it could also be a beautiful opportunity to grow in our caring for each other, as communities and as parish.

I hope you will engage with the plan, and especially with the process of registration, and I am kindly inviting you all again to be patient, as we are all learning new ways to make things work. As I already mentioned to you, all the information will be made available as soon as possible. Please, be assured of my prayer in this time of preparation to be back together, as I count on yours both for me and for all the people who are working with me to make the reopening possible.

With God's help, the time to be back together is coming close. I cannot wait to see you and celebrate Mass all together.

May the Lord bless you and protect you always,

Fr Francesco