

St. John the Baptist Orthodox Church
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Very Rev. Fr. Andrew D. Nelko (Rector)

23 May 2020

CHRIST IS RISEN! INDEED, HE IS RISEN!

"With childlike submission, we must endure both the pleasant and unpleasant, and give glory for everything to God Who is good; i.e., when any sorrow or sickness comes, we say: 'Glory to Thee, O Lord!' If the sorrows and illnesses increase, again we say, 'Glory to Thee, O Lord!' When the unhappy sorrows and illness have worsened and lead to the grave, again, 'Glory to Thee, O Lord!'"
(St. Anthony of Optina)

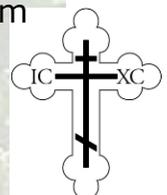
Dearly Beloved Brothers and Sisters,

Having gone through a public health crisis, the likes of which none of us have ever faced in our lifetimes, our parish is now preparing to open our liturgical services to more parishioners. Be assured this process is being undertaken in a thoughtful and safe manner.

Our attached clergy and Parish Council, following guidance of our Diocesan Archbishop His Grace Bishop Paul, are slowly and prayerfully moving forward. In short, social distancing requirements, building capacity and local guidelines will guide how many are able to attend services in person. The capacity numbers will also be determined by the Phase System outlined by His Grace in his directive of May 5th. All these changes will be based on a two-week decline in the statistical data (i.e., new cases, hospitalizations and an increase in testing rate numbers) in our area. Weekly capacity limits, and participation guidelines, will be regularly communicated in parish email announcements and posted on the Parish Website (www.stjohnthebaptist-campbell.org)

With this in mind on Friday May 22nd, after reviewing current area trends, His Grace blessed the parish to expand attendance at all liturgical services to 30 individuals beginning Monday May 24th (This includes the services connected with the Feast of Ascension - 27-28 May). The ultimate goal, based on continuing trends, is to increase that overall number to possibly 50 for Pentecost weekend (6-7 June).

However, those parishioners who fall into the "at risk" category (i.e., over 65, underlying health conditions, etc.), although not forbidden, are encouraged to weigh the risks of attending at least for the near future. Please remember, there are no negatives associated with a decision to not participate at this point. We will continue to live-stream our services on our Parish Facebook page for the time being.



Anticipating these changes in participation and safety protocol standards enclosed are procedures, blessed by Bishop Paul, that will be followed at St. John's as we open up to a more 'normal' liturgical service schedule. **Please keep these for reference!**

To conclude I cite the words of St. Maximos the Confessor who reminds us that:

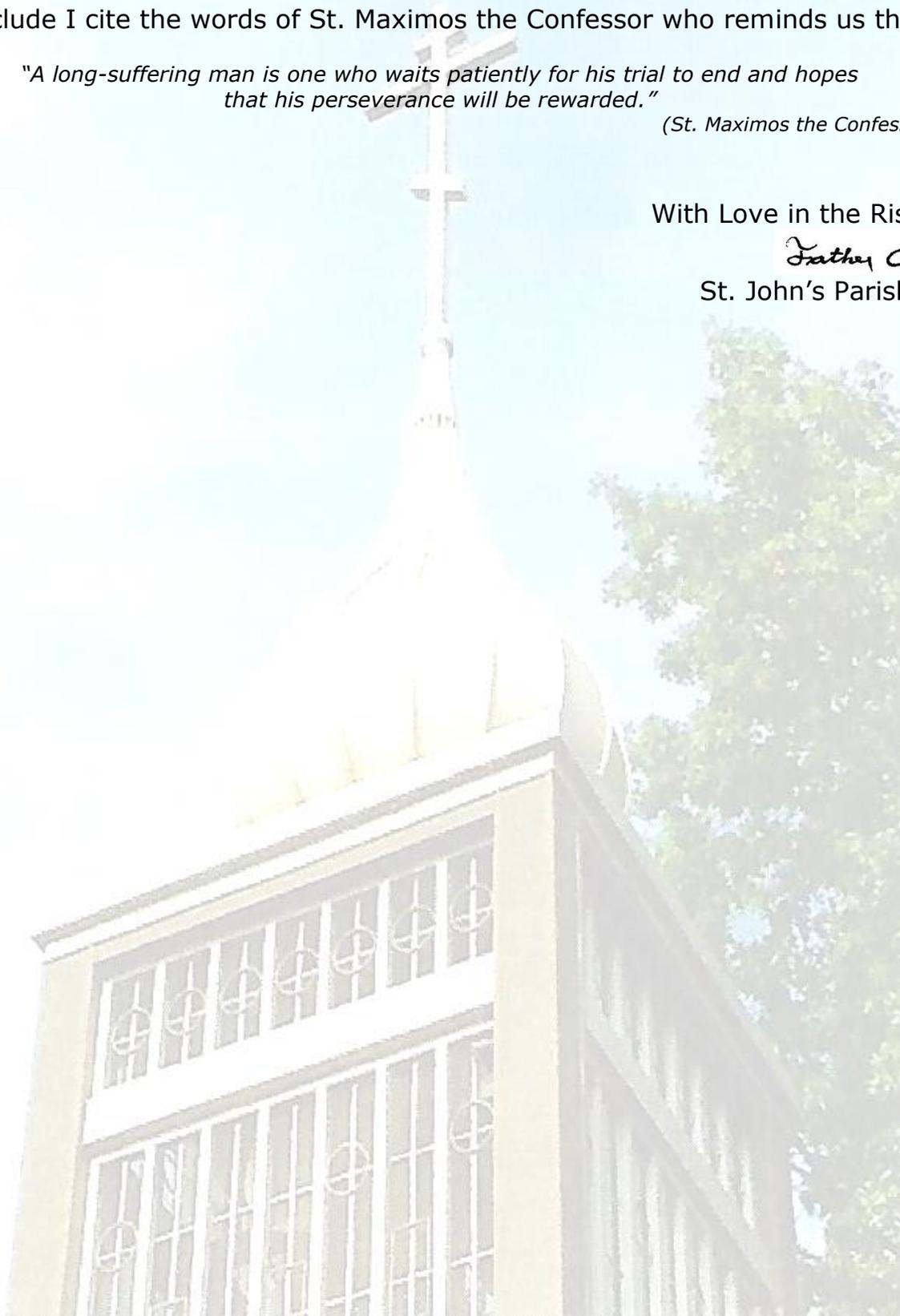
"A long-suffering man is one who waits patiently for his trial to end and hopes that his perseverance will be rewarded."

(St. Maximos the Confessor)

With Love in the Risen Lord,

Father Andrew

St. John's Parish Council



St. John the Baptist Reopening Procedure

General Directives:

Initially, please refer to the Holy Synod and Diocesan (DOM) guidelines:

<https://www.o.ca.org/cdn/PDFs/synod/2020-0501-covid-synod-directives.pdf>

<https://domoca.org/directives-for-reopening-the-diocese/>

- Members of the parish community should become familiar with the symptoms of the novel coronavirus, COVID-19 (**fever, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, chills, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, new loss of taste or smell**), and, if these symptoms present themselves, seek medical help immediately and self-isolate. In addition, if you currently present with symptoms, or have been diagnosed with the COVID-19 virus, **DO NOT ATTEND SERVICES!**
- If you are a healthcare professional who cares for COVID-19 patients, or have been exposed to or are caring for those with COVID-19, **DO NOT ATTEND SERVICES** until you have spoken to the priest and have been cleared to participate.
- If you are especially vulnerable to COVID-19, as a result of age or an underlying condition, understand and weight the risks involved in participating.
- Take precautions in participating if you have attended any crowded events / parties / other parishes within the past 14 days where social distancing and safety precautions are not in place.
- Continue to follow Center for Disease Control (CDC) directives, which currently include: washing/sanitizing hands thoroughly and frequently, covering your coughs and sneezes, avoid sharing personal items, wearing a mask and maintain a social distance of six feet. **(Note: If appropriate social distancing is maintained wearing a mask at this time is not required but is strongly encouraged. If conditions change, and the mask policy is adjusted, the congregation will be notified.)**

A reminder that the parish community of St. John the Baptist is taking every precaution to prevent the spread of COVID-19. However, it cannot be guaranteed that you will not become infected. Attending services may increase your risk of contracting COVID-19, especially if you are over 65 year of age or have an underlying health condition. **By entering, you voluntarily assume this increased risk of exposure or potential infection with COVID-19.**

Specific Guidelines / Actions Undertaken:

- At this time, opportunities to attend the Divine Liturgy on Sundays will be limited to parishioners of St. John the Baptist Parish.
- An attendance sheet will be maintained at all services as a resource required for notification in the event of an outbreak.

- Individuals will be asked to wash / sanitize their hands before or as they enter the church. Hand sanitizer will be available at the candle desk.
- To prevent airborne spread Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), specifically facemasks, are currently to be worn and should be brought with you to church. **(As per current directive, clergy and singers are not required to wear PPE (i.e., facemasks))**
- To minimize handling of money no change for candle purchases will be given. In addition, candles purchased will be lit by one specific individual to limit contact with lighters / tapers.
- Due to the need to maximize building capacity for the present time a greeter, balancing seating arrangements for families, singles and couples, will direct you to a place in the nave **(pews are marked for social distancing)**. You are asked to please remain at your designated spot during the service. Children are encouraged to remain with their parents.
- Service books will be removed from the pews. No books / Bibles will be left out for common use.
- Icons, the blessing cross, and other sacred vessels (i.e., Chalice) should be venerated without physical contact. Instead bow reverently.
- For the foreseeable future an usher will direct parishioners for Holy Communion maintaining social distance protocols.
- The Eucharist will be distributed by the priest as per directive of the Diocesan Bishop. This includes:
 - An individually cleaned communion spoon, or one spoon per family **(who live at a common residence)**.
 - No common communion cloths will be used. Individual paper towels will be distributed to individuals when they approach the Chalice. Following reception of the Sacrament the towels are to be placed in the container provided to be disposed of properly.
 - When communicants approach the Chalice they will be encouraged to open their mouths wide with head back so that the Eucharist may be placed directly in their mouth with minimal contact.
 - There will be no zapvika **(bread & wine)** following Communion.
- The church building will be cleaned routinely between services **(especially bathrooms after every use)**. Objects that are frequently touched, like door handles, or furniture will require more focused cleaning. Doors will be propped open so that doorknobs or handles do not need to be used. A designated person, usher or greeter, may be employed to monitor / open the main front door.
- The Holy Cross will not be given to venerate following the Divine Liturgy. Instead the faithful are encouraged to leave the church when the service is over and refrain from congregating on church property to initiate an informal social hour.

All the things listed are important steps as we move forward together. We need to be safe and careful. As Bishop Paul points out, ***"(M)y most important concern with utilizing the above is to minimize the risk of bringing harm to others."***