

## **Subject: Reopening Plan for St Irenaeus Church amid COVID-19**

Dear Parishioners,

I pray that you and your loved ones are healthy. As you may have seen, Cardinal Cupich recently shared our multi-phased plan for reopening churches in the Archdiocese of Chicago. Specifically,

- Phase I allows for parishes to reopen for Baptism, Reconciliation, Weddings and Funerals with a limit of 10 attendees.
- Phase IA allows for parishes to reopen for private prayer and adoration with a limit of 10 attendees.
- Phase II allows for reopening for weekday and weekend Masses for larger groups depending on the guidelines from the state and the capacity of the church building.

### **Our St Irenaeus Reopening Plan**

First and foremost, it is important for everyone to understand that our efforts will prioritize the safety and wellbeing of all while maintaining due respect and reverence for the sacraments and liturgical norms of our faith.

I will assemble a Parish Reopening Leadership Team with parishioner co-captains to lead our efforts. Together, we will attend required training from the Archdiocese to ensure that our parish reopening plan conforms to the guidelines developed by the Archdiocese in collaboration with civil and healthcare authorities. We will also receive a starter kit of protective gear and cleaning supplies, as well as guidance on purchasing/maintaining supplies ongoing.

There is a lot of information to go through regarding the guidelines for the reopening plan to be implemented. This week some of the staff will attend webinars which layout the requirements for the plans and the protocols required in the plan. In the near future volunteers who will be assisting in the implementation and execution of the plan will also be attending a webinar for certification.

### **Volunteers Needed**

We will need volunteers to assist with various aspects of our parish reopening plan. Importantly, leadership team members and volunteers must not be part of a “vulnerable population” (that is, not over the age of 65; no underlying medical condition such as diabetes; lung disease; undergoing cancer treatment, etc.). I ask all of you who are younger than 65 and healthy with no underlying health conditions to consider assisting with one of three reopening teams:

- Set-up team. Sample duties include ensuring that all supplies needed for each sacramental celebration/gathering are ready for use, entrances and exits are marked and propped physically open prior to attendees’ arrival/departure, windows are opened, etc.
- Greeting team. Sample duties include assisting in managing the flow of congregants as they enter the church, making sure attendees use hand sanitizer upon entering, are wearing a mask, and are reminded not to enter if ill; directing people to appropriate seating/waiting areas, etc.
- Cleaning team. Sample duties include maintaining and cleaning essential and trafficked areas of the church before and after the church has been used. Masks and gloves will be provided, if you do not have your own, in addition to approved cleaning/disinfecting supplies.

The Reopening Leadership Team and I will make sure that all volunteers are properly trained. Please send us a message at [stirenaeus@archchicago.org](mailto:stirenaeus@archchicago.org) or leave a voicemail at 708-748-6891 to indicate your willingness and ability to volunteer. From those that step forward, we will also request that some act as volunteer captains to help lead each of the three teams.

### **Timing for Our Reopening**

As I mentioned, the Parish Reopening Leadership Team members and I will need to complete required training, which will take place the week of May 18. Once we complete the training, we will need to review and complete tasks assigned to all parishes as part of a reopening certification process to be approved by the Archdiocese. Therefore, the soonest that any parish in the Archdiocese will realistically open for sacramental celebrations, private prayer or Eucharistic Adoration is likely the weekend of May 23. However, our parish, like all others in the archdiocese, will move forward at a pace and timing appropriate for its own situation. Therefore, at this time St Irenaeus **will not** be reopening the weekend of May 23.

Following our training and certification approval, at St Irenaeus, we will only open our church once the Reopening Leadership Team and I feel confident that we have the right volunteers in place to make it possible to reopen. Again, the need for parishioner assistance cannot be overstated. Given the importance of this process St Irenaeus will move cautiously and carefully before we hold any public celebration of liturgy or the sacraments. Every parishioner's health and well-being is of utmost importance.

The guidelines and measures required to reopen are designed to protect our wellbeing and that of our broader community. As Cardinal Cupich has noted, from the first pages of Scripture we learn that we indeed are "our brother's keeper." Jesus prayed, "that they all may be one" (Jn 17:21) and commanded us "love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another" (Jn 13:34). Our collective patience, willingness to help and the care we take to reopen is a demonstration of our unity and love for one another.

May God grant you His peace during this difficult time and may He manifest His love and presence to you in abundant ways. If you have any questions, please contact me at [stirenaeus@archchicago.org](mailto:stirenaeus@archchicago.org).

In God's Love

Fr Terry Johnson  
Pastor