

## **Welcome Back to St. Stephen Church!**

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

I thank God profoundly for his love, mercy and goodness to all of us throughout this unprecedented time in our life's history. Unequivocally, no one ever imagined or envisioned such an experience, but all in all we should be thankful to God that you and I are still alive, healthy and resilient. Thank you for continuing your love and faith to God during this difficult time. Please accept my humble gratitude for your philanthropy and support to St. Stephen Church during this crisis. Praised be to God that all our parishioners are safe, supposedly transitioning from stay home to stay safe in Ohio! This is the reason why we should tremendously offer gratitude to God for his guidance and protection.

Regardless of the challenges and uncertainties of the world's experience today, I am delighted to welcome all of you back to our beloved St. Stephen Church. The coronavirus pandemic experience should and must not deter us from coming together in solidarity stronger than even before, and to respond with conscientious focus on the profound resolve to reopen our church. The Catholic Bishops of Ohio have graciously recommended to have a soft opening of our Catholic Churches for public worship on Pentecost Sunday (i.e., Sunday, May 31, 2020). On that same note, the Administrator of the Cleveland Catholic Diocese, Rev. Fr. Donald Oleksiak, has humbly recommended that we softly open our churches with the public celebration of our weekday Masses on Monday, May 25.

Please be reminded that this soft opening of public celebration of Masses is temporal and will continue until the situation becomes normal. With weekday Masses here at St. Stephen, we shall maintain the status quo. With the Sunday Masses, note the following addition:

Saturday Vigil Mass 5:00 PM, Sunday English Mass 8:00 AM, Sunday Latin Mass 9:30 AM,  
Sunday English Mass 11:00 AM, Sunday Low Latin Mass 5:00 PM.

These changes are brought about mainly by two factors: distancing and cleaning of the church after every Mass. After missing you all for two months, I am looking forward with excitement to seeing you very soon!

As we prepare for the reopening of our church, consequently we should prepare and humble ourselves to follow all the guidelines from our Catholic Bishops and those from the Governor of Ohio. Please allow me to mention some few guidelines here which I thought are imperative: (i) The faithful are obliged to wear a mask (or other face covering) upon entering the church and during the celebration of Mass, except for the brief moment of receiving Holy Communion. Disposable masks should be made available at the doors of the church. (ii) Seating is to be arranged such that six feet of distance should be maintained between members of one household and another. (iii) All parishioners should be encouraged to take their temperatures prior to coming to Mass. Any parishioner with a temperature of 100.4 F or more should stay home. Anyone not feeling well should be encouraged to stay home. Read more about the guidelines at [www.dioceseofcleveland.org/forward-with-christ/worship-guidelines](http://www.dioceseofcleveland.org/forward-with-christ/worship-guidelines).

Finally, you know that I, Fr. Benjamin, Fr. Franz and Fr. Bede continue to pray for you and for all those affected by the coronavirus – the sick, the deceased, the grieving, the healthcare workers, first responders and all those who are impacted by this disease. May Mary, mother of the Church, intercede for us.

Sincerely Yours in Christ Jesus,

Fr. Caroli B. Shao A.J.