

Important Announcement



Phase II COVID-19 Restrictions for the Public Celebration of Mass Effective October 17, 2020

OVERVIEW

At this time, we remain amid a pandemic, although the situation in Arizona is steadily improving. While the desire to resume normal parish life quickly and completely is understandable, we nevertheless must continue to be prudent and thoughtful in how we go about the public celebration of Mass.

Bishop Wiesenberger, in consultation with Diocesan leadership and experts in public health, has directed all of the parishes to implement Phase II health and safety protocols, which are consistent with the protocols issued by the State of Arizona and the Centers for Disease Control.

Catholic churches throughout the diocese will soon be operating under Phase II guidelines. When and how we move from Phase II to Phase III will be driven by how the pandemic is affecting Arizona and particularly the Greater Eloy Area.

St. Helen of the Cross has submitted a comprehensive COVID-19 safety and infection control plan to the Diocese of Tucson and has been certified by the Bishop to enter Phase II of the public celebration of Mass. The safety and infection control plan can be found in the Emergency Plan Manual is located in the church and parish hall.

The most significant easing of protocols to Phase II involves:

- Church Seating Capacity
- Volunteers over 65
- Holy Communion
- Weekday Mass Schedule
- Sacrament of Reconciliation

Use the Table of Contents on the next page to find all the restrictions regarding Phase II protocols.

We look forward to your continued support of our beloved parish St. Helen of the Cross.

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**#WithGodAllThingsArePossible
PHASE II**

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR ATTENDING MASS: Public celebration of Mass under Phase II guidelines will begin on October 17, 2020.

Parish Masses will be limited to 1/3 of the seating capacity of the church (approximately 125 people) to ensure proper social distancing.

- Only the front door will be used for entering and exiting the church. The side doors will be for emergency use only.
- Ushers will escort you to the pews designated for the number of people in your family.
- At the end of Mass, ushers will coordinate, by row, your departure from the church.
- You and your family will be more than six feet from the next closest person or family. Families wanting to be seated together **MUST** arrive at the church at the same time.
- Seating in the pews will begin 30 minutes prior to the start of Mass to assure a prompt start of Mass. You are urged to arrive early. The seating capacity in the church is limited to approximately 125 people.
- Congregants over the age of two and who have no trouble breathing are required to wear a face mask.
- Please respect the signs posted at the church entrance indicating the church is at full capacity and that you need to return for a later-scheduled Mass.

WEEKEND MASS SCHEDULE — Phase II

Saturday Vigil 4:15 PM (English)

Sunday 9:00 AM (English) 11:00 AM (Spanish)

Note: Holy Rosary services normally prayed before each Mass remain temporarily suspended.

The following six protocols for public Mass remain in force until further notice:

- i. Holy Water fonts will remain empty. Ushers will prop open the front door of the church for congregants upon entering. You will not have to touch a door handle.
- ii. Parishioners are to express the “Sign of Peace” at Mass in a way that does not involve human touch, such as a small bow.
- iii. Pastors are to urge all parishioners to wash hands frequently. Special Ministers of Holy Communion (Eucharistic Ministers) are to wash their hands before and after the distribution of Holy Communion and to use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. The wearing of face masks by Eucharistic Ministers is required.
- iv. Pastors are to suspend the use of the Chalice for the congregation.

- v. Pastors are to ensure a thorough cleansing of all Communion vessels after each Mass.
- vi. Congregations are to suspend holding hands during the Our Father Prayer, for those parishes where this may be a local custom.

WEEKDAY MASSES

Tuesdays & Thursdays — 6:00 PM

Wednesdays & Fridays — 12:00 Noon

Note: Mass will be celebrated in the church

SACRAMENT of RECONCILIATION

Tuesdays & Thursdays — 5:00 PM

Saturdays — 3:00 PM

Note: Confession will be heard in the chapel. Use the chapel entrance.

THE WEARING OF FACE MASKS IS REQUIRED: The use of a face mask is required upon entering the church. The use of facial masking is a sign of your desire to do your part in helping to prevent others from potential contagion. As our clergy are repeatedly in our churches, in the words of Bishop Weisenburger, *“The use of a mask is an especially strong sign of your support for your priests and ministers”*.

SAFE ENVIRONMENT: A plan for disinfecting those parts of the church used by parishioners, especially the pews and bathrooms, following each Mass is critical and will be done by a team of parish volunteers. **Note:** Only industrial-strength solvents capable of killing the coronavirus will be used as a disinfectant.

THE ELDERLY & AT-RISK — All parishioners who qualify as vulnerable individuals are strongly urged to continue to shelter in place and not make in-person visits to church. The definition “vulnerable persons” are those over the age of 65 or vulnerable due to a health condition associated with COVID-19 (respiratory, diabetes, heart, immune deficiency). **Note:** Those living with vulnerable persons should avoid coming onto parish campus out of concern for bringing the virus back to their homes.

THE SUNDAY OBLIGATION: All persons living in or visiting Eloy, or other church in the Diocese of Tucson, are indefinitely excused from the Sunday Mass obligation.

Note: Those living with vulnerable persons should avoid coming onto the parish campus out of concern for bringing the virus back to their homes.

VOLUNTEERS — VOLUNTEERS “UNDER” THE AGE OF 65: Volunteers under the age of 65 in good health, and without chronic health problems, may continue their ministry while observing all standard protocols.

VOLUNTEERS — VOLUNTEERS “OVER” THE AGE OF 65: Those over the age of 65 but with no chronic health problems may resume their ministry at their discretion and in consultation with Fr. Marco Carrasco, Pastor. Regretfully, volunteers over the age of 65 with chronic health problems must refrain from public ministry.

FUNERALS & WEDDINGS— There will be no gatherings or events on the parish campus other than weekday Masses, weekend Masses, funerals, and weddings. All of these events/services in Phase II are limited the same as Mass, that being 33 percent of capacity (approximately 125 people) and vulnerable persons are strongly discouraged from participating. Wearing a face mask is required. Holy Communion will be given outside the front of the church.

PARISH CAMPUS: While on the parish campus, all persons must maintain strict social distancing protocols; this entails maintaining approximately six feet of space between unrelated persons including when indoors. Wearing a face mask is required.

EUCCHARISTIC MINISTERS: Eucharistic Ministers must adhere to all protocols including liberal use of hand-sanitizers as well as the use of facemasks. **Note:** Eucharistic Ministers of Holy Communion shall NOT be from the vulnerable population if they have an underlying health condition.

HOLY COMMUNION: Holy Communion will be offered indoors, but with no lines. Instead, Eucharistic Ministers will come to each pew. **Note:** Holy Communion will be given only in the hand. As we have demonstrated before, hold your hands in the form of a cup so that the Eucharist may be gently dropped from the hand of the Minister into the cupped hands of the recipient—avoiding hand-to-hand contact. It’s another safety measure to keep you and your family as safe a reasonably possible.

WEEKLY MASS OFFERING: The traditional way of receiving your generous weekly offering in support of the parish, will be collected at the end of Mass as you depart. A collection basket will be strategically placed by the exit door in the vestibule.

HYMNALS & CONGREGATIONAL SINGING: Because singing puts an infinitely greater number of contagion droplets in the air, hymnals and congregational singing is suspended until further notice. Missals and Hymn books will be removed from the church until further notice.

BAPTISMS: Attendance at Baptisms are limited to twenty (20) persons. Critical to the celebration of a baptism during this phase is *social distancing* during the celebration. It has been observed repeatedly that celebrations involving persons well known to one another are occasions with a far greater chance of a breakdown in social distancing, etc. The celebrant of Baptism should instruct the family ahead of time as to the importance of social distancing. **Note:** Outdoor baptisms (on parish property) are permitted at this time.

ADORATION: Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament will be scheduled monthly for one hour and will take place immediately after a celebrated Mass. People remaining for Adoration shall remain in the seat they occupied for Mass. The congregants must continue to use masks. Adoration will take place in the church. The monthly date for Adoration will be announced in advance and posted on all the parish social media platforms.

CONFIRMATION: Confirmation celebrations will follow the protocols of Sunday Mass. Individual cotton balls will be used for the anointing and there is to be no “hand-shake” (sign of peace). In its place the celebrant and recipient of the Sacrament are to verbally extend a wish for peace perhaps with a partial bow to one another.

QUINCEAÑERAS: Quinceaneras celebrations will follow the same protocols as Sunday Masses. Public celebratory gatherings before or after the celebration at the entrance of the Church or on the Church grounds are to be discouraged. Parish facilities may not be rented at this time for celebrations. The guideline listed above for mariachi bands also applies.

PARISH MEETINGS: Parish meetings ordinarily are to be held through technology. By exception, they may resume in-person but only when participants are meeting outdoor and the participants freely agree to participate. Those who cannot participate in an in-person “outdoor” meeting should be provided the opportunity to participate through technology. All in-person, outdoor meetings must follow social distancing protocols and the use of masks is mandatory.

FUND-RAISING ENDEAVORS, INCLUDING RAFFLES: These endeavors will need to be assessed on a case-by-case basis. The critical issue will be the extent to which safety protocols can be applied. Fund-raising efforts involving food will probably not be permitted in this phase and they would have to be cleared by a county health department before approaching the Diocese.

ARE YOU FEELING ILL? If you are feeling ill, no matter the symptoms, you are urged, in the strongest sense, to remain at home and not come onto parish property.

ADDED SAFETY MEASURES: **1]** The church will be entirely closed on Monday through Thursday, except for funerals, to allow any potential contagion left behind on a surface to die. **2]** The chapel, because of its confined area, will be closed until further notice.

WHAT TO VOLUNTEER? As you can imagine, the guidelines to keep everyone safe is a daunting task. Many of our **Lectors** and **Eucharistic Ministers** are over 65. This is a wonderful opportunity to step up and serve your parish in its time of great need. Choose

a Mass you normally attend and serve in one or both of these spiritually rewarding positions and become part of the Mass. Training will be provided. It's remarkably easy.

Also, we need volunteers to join the **Safe Environment Team**. As with the Lectors and Eucharistic Ministers, choose the Mass you normally attend to volunteer.

INTERESTED? Email StHelensatEloy@Gmail.com Place in the Subject line "**Count Me In**" and in the body of the message your telephone number.

INTERACTION WITH THE PRIESTS — Priests throughout the diocese will not be shaking hands or making physical contact with parishioners.

COMMUNICATIONS WITH PARISHIONERS: Stay Current — The Diocese of Tucson is closely monitoring COVID-19 developments. As events warrant and changes are made, they will be communicated immediately to you.

To receive immediate updates, "Follow" the parish Facebook Page at <https://www.facebook.com/St.Helen.of.the.Cross> Or visit the parish website at <http://sthelenchurch.com/>

Questions, clarifications or concerns about the phase one reopening should be directed to the parish email address at St.HelensatEloy@Gmail.com **Note:** If you prefer to learn about updates directly via email, send an email to this address and write in the Subject line "**Keep Me Informed.**" Your name will be added to the parish database.

ANOINTING OF THE SICK

Regretfully, Anointing of the Sick remains suspended during Phase II.

A MESSAGE FROM FR. MARCO — As your pastor, I want to assure you that the parish will undertake comprehensive measures to keep you reasonably safe. I have had a series of meetings with all of the ministries and key parish leaders and we are of one mind that your safety is paramount. As outlined throughout the reopening plan, every reasonable effort will be undertaken to keep our beloved church free from the scourge of COVID-19. A team of volunteers is ready to serve you. Social distancing guidelines are in place and will be adhered to at every Mass you attend. But let's also be realistic. During these unprecedented times, there is an inherent risk, regardless of your age, of attending any public event. This includes religious services. Going to the grocery store is a risk. No one — no organization, public or private — can be guaranteed absolute safety, and that only you, as faithful Catholic, need to acknowledge the inherent risk before returning to the public celebration of Mass. **Important:** Your presence at a public event constitutes your understanding and acceptance of this essential level of risk.

May God bless you and keep you safe.

Rev. Marco Carrasco
Pastor

Roman Catholic
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Church

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