

June 15, 2020

Dear Parishioners,

I hope this letter finds you and your families well. It has certainly been a journey over these past three months! As we continue our gradual reopening of St. Joseph's for public worship and parish life, it has been good to see more and more of you back each week. I know the decision of when to return is one that each individual person or family must make. To give you an indication of things, in our first week open for weekend Masses, there were 100 people total in attendance. By the fourth week, we had 240 people. Also, of the three weekend Masses – Saturday 5pm, and Sunday 8 am and 11 am – the third Mass (11 am) is currently the most attended. Slowly and surely, we are cautiously, but courageously, returning to our familiar routines here at the parish.

I write this letter to you since we have moved into the Green Phase. Bishop Gainer has promulgated updates to the procedures, and I want to share with you how we will implement those here. First and foremost, I want to let everyone know, you are welcome at St. Joseph's. Those who are vulnerable populations, should continue to take prudent steps they deem necessary to protect their health, but you'll know the right time to come back. Please know that **all** people, regardless of age, are welcome here for worship!

Here's what you'll find now in the Green Phase, and until further notice. Our intention is that all of these changes are temporary. Yes, we need to abide by them now, but we are working toward resuming normalcy little by little, until one day we find ourselves in the "All Clear".

- Now that we are getting into the hotter months, following diocesan guidance, we will have the air conditioning on, while having the windows open and the ceiling fans on.
- As an act of charity toward one another, masks are still to be worn in the church. While not a policy, some people may find they need to take a short "breathing break", lowering their masks while in the church, which can be acceptable for brief periods of time if need be.
- We will still maintain distancing in the church for Masses. Since we have such a big church, the good news is that we will now be able to accommodate about **75 FAMILIES** (as opposed to individuals) at each weekend Mass, and about 50 people during weekday Masses. Families in the same household do not need to distance. Yellow dots will still indicate where you may sit in the church. You can come to Mass as often as you like during the week.
- Recorded weekday Masses have ceased since June 12. Recorded **weekend** Masses will continue indefinitely and will be uploaded to YouTube as usual, and on SECV TV.
- Holy Communion will be restored to its proper place during the Mass. You are still to wear masks as you approach the altar and maintain the usual distancing coming forward. When you are next in line, simply lower your mask, and then raise it right after receiving the Eucharist.
- The Parish office will resume normal operating hours – 8 am to 4 pm (closed from 12 to 1 pm).

- Confessions will continue to take place outside the chapel entrance (Cole's Alley) at their usual times – Saturdays from 3:30 to 4:30 pm; Sundays from 9:30 to 10:30 am; and Thursdays from 5:30 to 6:00 pm.
- We will still have the 1 pm distribution of Holy Communion outside of Mass on Sunday afternoons. You are to first participate in Mass at home by watching it online or on TV. Then come to the alley entrance at the chapel by turning off of Ferry St. I will continue until the line of cars ends.
- If you are not able to come to church still because of health concerns surrounding the coronavirus, I can bring the sacraments to your home (Holy Communion, Reconciliation, and/or Anointing of the Sick). I will wear a mask and maintain distancing. If you would prefer to meet outside, that is an option as well. Just call the parish office to schedule this.
- Until further notice – Eucharistic Adoration with the Blessed Sacrament exposed on the altar takes place in the church from 4 to 7 pm on Tuesdays and 10 am to 1 pm on Thursdays. The church continues to be open for personal prayer from 9 am to 3 pm each day, Monday through Saturday, and on Sunday mornings before Masses.
- St. Hubert Hall will be open for parish groups that wish to meet starting July 1. Please schedule any meetings with the parish offices in advance. Masks and distancing are required indoors, and those groups must sanitize tables and chairs at the conclusion of their meeting. Groups may also choose to meet outside. In this case, masks are not required, but distancing still is.
- Please note, we are running low on hand sanitizer, and we have not been able to get more of the auto-dispenser product. Please bring your own sanitizer from home until we can replenish the dispensers.

A final reminder for everyone as well. If you have a fever of 100.4 degrees or any symptoms of respiratory illness, or if you have been tested for COVID-19 and are still awaiting the results, please remain at home until all symptoms subside and / or you have a negative test result.

If you have any further questions, please don't hesitate to contact me. I'm looking forward to seeing you here at St. Joseph's. Whether it's been a few days, a few months, or a few years, you are welcome here! God bless you.

in Christ's love,



Rev. Timothy D. Marcoe
pastor