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21 April 2021

To: St. Paul Parishioners

Re: Update on Pandemic Guidelines at St. Paul Parish – Olathe

The JOCO Board of County Commissioners will not be extending the mask and social distancing mandate effective Friday, April 30th. **They are strongly recommending the continued use of masks and social distancing, as well as encouraging everyone to get the coronavirus vaccine as soon as possible.** Please schedule an appointment for a vaccine through the JOCO Health Department at jocovaccine.rsvpify.com.

Beginning on May 1st - 2nd we will make the following updates at St. Paul Parish:

- Wearing masks at the Masses will no longer be required but their continued use will continue to be encouraged and respected.
- The seating capacity in the Worship Space will increase as the demand for seating increases.
- We will end the use of the reservation system.

The reception of Holy Communion will begin to return to the pre-pandemic format, with Communion lines. We would like to remind everyone of the following:

- Please make a reverent bow before receiving the Body of Christ.
- One may receive the Body of Christ either in the hand or on the tongue.
- The Blood of Christ will be reintroduced in the near future.

The Live Stream broadcast of the Mass on **spcatholic.live** will continue until further notice. However, we now encourage everyone to return to St. Paul for the celebration of the Holy Mass with the community as soon as you feel comfortable in doing so. (Please read the enclosed reflection following this letter submitted by parishioner Roxanne Aaron about her first return to Sunday Mass in many months.)

Confessionals and Holy Water:

We will also begin to use the Confessionals again for the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation on Wednesdays at 6 p.m. and Saturdays at 3:30 p.m. Holy Water will return to the fonts at the entrance and exits to the Worship Space.

Parish Groups:

Groups may begin meeting again starting on July 1st. We encourage groups to consider a hybrid approach (people can either meet in person or online) as we work our way back to full participation in groups. You may schedule meeting space and dates by contacting Claudia Ramirez at pastoralassist@spcatholic.org

End of the Dispensation:

Archbishop Naumann has chosen the Solemnity of The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ, the weekend of June 5th - 6th, as the occasion on which the dispensation from the obligation by the faithful to attend Mass shall be lifted. Beginning that weekend, all the Catholic faithful residing within the Archdiocese of Kansas City in Kansas must return to observing the precept of the Church to attend Sunday Mass and Holy Days of Obligation.

Of course, those who suffer from underlying health concerns or compromised immunity, or who have genuinely serious concerns about the risk of contracting the coronavirus, are not bound by the obligation to attend Mass.

Thank you very much:

We are very proud of everyone in our parish for respecting and practicing the recommendations of the JOCO Health Department during the pandemic. This positive response corresponded to the Catholic Social Teaching of support of the common good (Gaudium et spes, #30, Vatican II) and has been a Christian expression of solidarity with others (On Social Concerns #38, St. John Paul II, 1987), by promoting public health during a pandemic. Thank you for this good witness.

If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact me.

We hope to see you soon in person at St. Paul.

God bless you.



Fr. Michael Hermes
frhermes@spcatholic.org

Reflection by Roxanne Aaron
St. Paul parishioner
11 April 2021

After 57 weeks of avoiding large indoor gatherings, my husband and I returned to attending Sunday Mass in person today. Throughout the pandemic we have been grateful to participate in our parish Sunday Mass via livestream. Now, having received vaccinations, we decided it was time to return to a large Sunday gathering. We had “dipped our toes in the water” attending a few daily Masses as well as the Funeral Masses of family members where there had been smaller crowds, but there was something very special about attending a regular Sunday gathering with our parish family.

Approaching St. Paul, we immediately were welcomed by the friendly greeters and then directed to seats up front by an usher. Pods of chairs were spaced apart for safe distancing and everyone wore masks. This gave us a sense of comfort, as this was the first large gathering we had attended in over a year. We were seated near ladies from my parish women’s group and were close to the musicians (including a young violinist who we had previously complimented as we followed her progress in musicianship). Head nods and smiling eyes let us know we were once again in the company of friends. Father Michael happened to recognize us as we were seated at the front, and he welcomed us back to the Sunday gathering as he passed by.

Surrounded by the beautiful Easter flower display and welcomed by this community of believers, I experienced the Sunday Mass differently than I had during all those months via livestream. I was no longer distracted by the surroundings of my home and was able to focus more intently on the Mass. I prayed aloud and sang more readily. I felt a reverence that had been lacking in the livestream experience. I felt the presence of God through the presence of the community and ultimately through the Eucharist. While the many Acts of Spiritual Communion prayed over the preceding months were valuable, they did not compare to my true communion with God today. I sensed the joy of my “First Communion” all over again. The many limitations of livestream bandwidth were lifted to allow me to experience God’s holy presence more fully.

I encourage everyone who is currently participating in Sunday Mass via livestream, to consider when they will return to attending the community celebration in person. As I mentioned to Father Michael after Mass, the “livestream is good, but in person is definitely better”.