

A Note of Gratitude

After my first couple months here at St. Julie's, I wish to thank everyone for the very warm welcome and for the many kind messages of support and encouragement I have received. As I have told many of my family and friends, parish life has been much busier than I expected, but it has been a very soft landing and easy adjustment so far; and for this, I am grateful.

I am also very grateful for the cooperation of all of you with the safety precautions we are taking here at St. Julie's in response to the ongoing virus threat. As you all know by now, we are required by both the state and the diocese to wear masks, to distance at least six feet between members of different households, and to sanitize our hands both upon entering the church and before receiving Holy Communion. We also clean the church with disinfectant after each time it is used. Although some might feel that these measures are not strictly necessary, they are nevertheless the conditions imposed on us if we want to keep the church open. And I am so grateful that we have been able to keep the church open for Masses and confessions and baptisms and funerals. So far, we are moving in the right direction and have found a way to provide pastoral and spiritual services while keeping everyone safe.

The diligence with which we follow these safety measures has encouraged many people to begin returning to church for Mass. The space restrictions allow us to seat members of 80 different households, but with a maximum capacity of about 160 people, and an average of about 120, depending on how many attend individually and alone. We have added some chairs for overflow seating, where possible, in an effort to prevent turning anyone away at Mass. We ask for your continued patience and cooperation as we try each week to maximize our attendance while ensuring everyone's safety. And we also ask that those seated in the front sections of the church allow those seated in the back sections to exit first at the end of Mass, in order to avoid congestion and crowding at the doors of the church. Exiting by the side doors is also an option and recommended.

In response to some recent inquiries, it is not yet necessary to make a reservation to attend weekend Masses. The 9:00 Mass on Sunday has come close to full capacity a few times, but there are still seats available at both the 4:30 Vigil Mass on Saturday and the 11:00 Mass on Sunday. If and when it becomes necessary, we will add an additional Mass to the Sunday schedule to accommodate those who desire to attend. And, we will continue to livestream the 9:00 Sunday Mass for the homebound and those who might have a higher risk of contracting the virus and are not yet comfortable attending Mass.

We should all keep in mind that in some parts of the world today, Catholics face far worse restrictions on the practice of their faith and are even denied their religious liberty. This reality should make all of us grateful that we can continue to practice our faith, as long as we continue to observe these safety measures that are relatively moderate and simple. Thank you!