

From the Pastor — COVID Restriction Updates

May 30, 2021

Dear Parishioners,

At the end of May, both the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the Archdiocese of Boston are relaxing most of the COVID restrictions we have all been embracing for the past year. This is due to the plummeting number of COVID cases and the widespread distribution of the vaccine in our area.

Effective June 1st in all of our churches, the following changes will occur:

- **Face masks will be optional for all parishioners who are vaccinated** at all parish events and liturgies. Those who are not vaccinated or who are at a higher risk for contracting a severe case of COVID are encouraged to continue wearing a face mask based on the recommendation of their doctor.
- **Registration for weekend Masses will be discontinued.** If there is ever the need to notify anyone regarding a possible exposure to COVID through one of our liturgies, this will be done on our [website](#).
- Our churches will continue to be cleaned regularly; however, **it is no longer necessary to have them sanitized after every Mass.**
- **Seating restrictions will be loosened**, with some areas of the church kept in the existing COVID configuration for a time, to allow those who do not feel comfortable to maintain a greater distance from others.
- **Holy Communion will continue to be distributed in the hand and under the form of bread only.** Parishioners are reminded that the full presence of Christ is present under either species, whether receiving from the plate or the cup. The Archdiocese will review this situation and advise us when we might consider a return to offering the Communion Cup for everyone.
- All clergy and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion will use hand sanitizer and **wear face masks while distributing Communion**, even if they are not worn at other times during the Mass.
- **Hand sanitizer** will continue to be made available in all of our churches and parishioners are encouraged to wash their hands frequently and maintain good personal hygiene as before.
- We continue to ask parishioners to **monitor their own health** and to refrain from attending public Mass if they feel sick, have any of the symptoms of COVID or have been exposed recently to anyone who has.
- At this time, we will continue to **refrain from general hand-shaking at the Sign of Peace**, however, parishioners who live together may do as they wish among their families and all parishioners are encouraged to offer a friendly gesture such as a gentle wave of the hand or nod of the head in recognition of what the Sign of Peace means among us as a congregation.
- Regular **Saturday afternoon confessions will be held, beginning in June** from 3:00–3:30 p.m. in Immaculate Conception Church. These will be held in the main body of the church at the discretion of the priest. Confessions will also continue to be available at other times and places during the week by appointment.

- **We will continue to livestream the 4:00 p.m. Vigil Mass**, however, this will be done from one of our 3 Collaborative churches on a rotating basis, and the separate livestream Mass from St. James Chapel will end. Parishioners are encouraged to enjoy our livestream celebration through [Facebook](#) and our [website](#) any time they are not able to join us in person.
- For the summer months, **we will continue to take up our collections via the collection boxes** located at the entranceways to the churches. This will be re-evaluated in the fall. All parishioners are encouraged to continue their support of the Church through their in-person contributions, participation in the on-line giving programs, or by mailing in their contributions. Everyone's generosity is greatly appreciated!
- We will continue our limited music program through the summer months, anticipating a return to **full music and choral singing in the fall**. New worship aids (*Breaking Bread* hymnals) will be ordered for the beginning of Advent. Parishioners are welcome at this time to participate in singing at Mass as much as they wish.
- We will look to **return the ministry of Altar Serving to our Masses this fall** after a period of training and recruitment.
- **All parish groups may resume in-person meetings at full capacity.** Please contact our Collaborative Office to schedule or reserve your meeting space and time.
- **Immaculate Conception Church will reopen during the day** for private prayer, subject to the custodian's schedule.
- We are awaiting additional guidance regarding schools and Religious Education Programs, but we will share with you those changes when they are known.

Also, please note:

- We will plan to **return the 4:00 pm Vigil Mass to the Holy Redeemer churches beginning in July** with Nativity Church and rotating them going forward on a monthly basis.
- **Beginning in July, we will change the Sunday morning Masses at Holy Redeemer to 8:30 a.m. at Nativity and 10:00 a.m. at St. Ann.** This decision was from a recent conversation with the Pastoral Council and done in the hopes of welcoming more people to a Sunday morning experience in both churches. This will be re-evaluated in the fall.

I want to take this moment to thank our many dedicated volunteers who were invaluable in helping us to navigate these uncertain times. Your selfless acts of service and enthusiastic presence are truly contagious, in the best use of that term!

Let us all be patient with one another as we slowly return to what will be our new normal going forward. The respect that we offer to others who may feel differently than we do is a true hallmark of our love for each other in Jesus Christ. The Lord has been with us through this dark valley, and the Lord will guide us together to more verdant pastures where we all may find repose.

Wishing you a happy and healthy summer,

Fr. Timothy Harrison, Pastor