

Saint Joseph CATHOLIC CHURCH

GUIDING OUR PUBLIC WORSHIP WHILE EMERGING FROM THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC PENTECOST 2021

With praise and thanksgiving to God and in collaboration with those in the medical fields, we are at a place – providentially just after Pentecost 2021 – when we can speak of the ability to worship again around the Table of the Lord with less restrictions. Throughout the pandemic, our Parish Staff strove to maintain a safe and prayerful experience for all. As we move into this next phase, this is still very much our aim. **Since the Diocese of Cleveland has released its guidelines for celebrating Mass during this time, much like before, every parish is different, the development of parish-specific implementation falls upon the Pastor, Parish Staff, and parishioners, particularly in our case, the involvement of our Health and Wellness Ministry. In consultation with these groups and recognizing that we are still evolving with everyone’s own personal comfortability, we have adopted these policies for us beginning on Wednesday, June 2, 2021.** We have elected to keep some COVID-19 precautions in place for the time being and plan to end those at a later time. We definitely look forward to welcoming more people back and into our church where we will be able to worship together more fully once again! The changes below represent another step forward in modifications hopefully leading to what will be “better than normal” sooner than later:

- Before getting into the details of our policies, we wish to speak briefly about the restoration of the obligation to attend Sunday Mass. As you may have read, with the recent decision of the Catholic Bishops of Ohio, the obligation of the faithful to attend Sunday Mass and Holy Days of Obligation resumes with the Weekend Masses for the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ, June 5-6, 2021. Ultimately, we attend Mass so that we might worship God and receive the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. We can only most fully receive Jesus’ Real Presence when we are physical present to receive Him. However, as it has always been the case:
 - Those who have a serious reason, the sick and infirmed as well as those with pre-existing conditions, those who are incapable of physically attending Mass, and those who care for someone who is immuno-compromised are exempt from attending Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation. They should, however, make every effort to watch a broadcast of Mass from their homes.
 - Members of the faithful who choose not to attend Mass in person out of significant fear or anxiety of contracting the coronavirus in a large group of persons are also exempt from their obligation (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2181). Nevertheless, these persons should observe the Lord’s Day (*Code of Canon Law*, cc.1247) and are encouraged to spend time in prayer on Sunday, through viewing a broadcast or live-stream of the Sunday Mass. Such broadcasted or live-stream Masses are not intended as a substitute for persons who are able to gather for the celebration of the Sacred Liturgy on Sundays and

other Holy Days of Obligation. They are intended for the sick, the homebound, and those who are unable to attend Mass in person.

- We will continue to live-stream both Saturday's 4:30pm and Sunday's 10am Mass for those who cannot physically attend Mass. Sometime next year and based upon YouTube's statistics, we will reduce to one live-streamed Mass at the most watched time.
- Please continue to self-monitor for signs of any illness: especially a fever of 100.4, cough, or shortness of breath; if these are present, you should not come to Mass and perhaps, consider a follow-up with your medical provider. You can participate safely in a live-stream Mass until well.
- As we did prior to the pandemic, we will continue to have hand sanitizer dispensers available and encourage you to make use of them when arriving to the building.
- While facial coverings and social distancing are no longer required, those who have not been vaccinated or otherwise are considered vulnerable are encouraged to continue to wear facial coverings and remain separated from other households. As we have encouraged throughout the entire pandemic, we rely upon one's own conscience and our good will towards our neighbor in making our best decision for what we ought to do.
- Whenever someone wishes to continue to wear a facial covering or remain distant from others, these personal decisions should be respected out of charity. No one is being asked to inquire of you whether or not you have been vaccinated. In particular, our Health and Wellness Committee reminds us that our children under 12 are not eligible to be vaccinated and while they may not get ill from COVID, they could expose a vulnerable unvaccinated family member. Some families may be concerned that their children are not protected and may avail themselves of the use of facial coverings and being distant from other households.
- Since the Baptismal Font is both treated and filtered, using both filter media and UV light, and constantly circulated, we will begin to use it again. For the time being, the regular Holy Water Fonts at the doors of the church will not be used. Should you wish to avail yourself of Holy Water, you may obtain it from the Baptismal Font.
- We are able to use all pews and return to our church's full capacity of 800 people; once again, we know there may be those among us who may wish to maintain distance. In order to accommodate this, even though three out of four sections of the church will return to using every pew, the section closest to the school will remain "distanced" with alternating pews blocked off until a later date.
- Daily Masses and Evening Prayer will return to using the Chapel.
- The Cry Room will once again be available. Given its size, we suggest this be a first-come, first use room, with a limit to one family per Mass.
- Hymnals will return and we will also continue to utilize page 6 of our Sunday Bulletin to provide a "short" worship aid, including lyrics.

- The presider, lector, any servers, and deacon, if there is one, will once again process into the church from the Gathering Area, as well as, recess to there at the end of Mass.
- Though they no longer must wear facial coverings while distributing Communion, all those distributing Communion – whether lay or cleric – are encouraged to continue sanitizing their hands before entering the sanctuary, after receiving Communion themselves, and following the distribution of Communion.
- Since we believe that receiving Jesus in either species constitutes receiving the entire body, blood, soul, and divinity of Jesus, we will continue to only offer Holy Communion in the form of the Host for the foreseeable future. We will now permanently use the Communion lines and stations that have been in use for the last year, with the addition of a second person in the Main Aisle. Now, both sides of the Main Aisle will be able to come forward simultaneously.
- While the reception of Communion on the tongue or on the hand remains the discretion of the communicant, we encourage those opting to receive on the tongue to wait until near the end of a Communion line and to receive Communion from either a priest or a deacon.
- If you are gluten intolerant, please contact the Presider to arrange for alternative arrangements.
- We will again “pass the basket” for the Offertory Collection. Later this summer with the next Liturgical Minister Schedule, we will also reinstate the Offertory Procession.
- For the time being, as the Sign of Peace is an option within our liturgy, please follow the invitation of the Presider or deacon. During this time, any physical contact should only be within your household or family, while acknowledgment of other households can be done with a friendly wave, nod, or a “peace” sign.
- Beginning with events on July 1, 2021, parish groups and ministries may begin to meet using our facilities without any capacity restrictions. You must request rooms as has always been required and using the recommended methods.
- Finally, representing a full-circle return to one of our treasured weekend customs, we anticipate Coffee and Donuts will return on Sunday, September 12, 2021.

In conclusion, thank you for your patience and cooperation over the past year! We truly have a great community and it showed throughout some difficult and confusing times. As we recall the gift of Pentecost, we are grateful for the presence of the Holy Spirit and Christ’s promise never to abandon us which was realized in the sending of an advocate, the Holy Spirit. As we press onward in the power of the Holy Spirit, we hope these policies will safely guide our next steps of reopening until the time when we can most fully celebrate the Eucharist as we did before COVID-19. Though we are mindful that in a community as large as ours, there are many diverse opinions and levels of comfortability; we believe that these policies allow us to strike a middle ground as part of our ongoing emergence from this pandemic. As Fr. Joe said in his Easter 2020 homily, “the comeback is always stronger than the setback”, this is our chance to comeback stronger and strive to be “better than normal”...

We look forward to seeing you in church!