



6/8/21

Dear Parishioners,

As we now begin the long season of Ordinary Time, we are greeted with the welcome improvement in the pandemic and its associated restrictions. While the health concerns are not over, it is good to see that things are headed in a better direction! As a result, a number of the procedures we have had to follow are being eliminated or modified in accordance with government health officials and the Archdiocese of Chicago. This is an evolving process with guidelines and directives being updated frequently. It will also take us some time to arrange for the resumption of practices that are no longer prohibited. I would like to share with you some of the latest information and plans.

- We will no longer require registration to attend Mass and attendance restrictions have been lifted. We will continue to livestream Mass for those who cannot join in person.
- Masks are no longer required for those who are fully vaccinated. Those who are not yet vaccinated or have a compromised immune system are asked to continue wearing a mask. Those who feel more comfortable wearing a mask should certainly feel free to do so and we should not jump to any conclusions about any in our parish family who choose to continue wearing a mask. I would ask that we treat everyone around us with patience and understanding during this time.
- Hand sanitizer will continue to be available at the parish and frequent hand sanitation is requested.
- The ropes blocking off rows of pews have been removed and you may sit where you wish. However, as we begin to lift these restrictions, we do ask that you do your best to maintain 3-6' of distance between households.
- Priests, deacons and communion ministers will wear masks while distributing communion for everyone's protection. Communion will continue to be distributed only in the hand. These measures are meant to not only protect yourself but also our ministers and your fellow parishioners.
- We will also be re-filling the baptismal font, the sign of our communion as disciples of the Lord. And we will be resuming the bringing of gifts at the Offertory. For the time being we will not be passing collection baskets, so please continue to use the boxes at the doors where you enter/leave the worship space.

We thank you for your patience and cooperation as we navigate these uncharted waters. Health officials tell us that the pandemic is not over yet, so we need to be prudent and follow the procedures to reduce the chances of a resurgence. These and other guidelines will continue to change over the next few weeks. Please check our website, [www.stmaryfc.org](http://www.stmaryfc.org), for the latest details. We will begin gradually resuming a number of our ministries as circumstances and our ability to properly coordinate things permits.

We are very excited to be returning to familiar practices and having more people gathered to celebrate the Eucharist! Thank you to our many volunteers who have helped us to stay safe and healthy over the past year. We are indeed grateful. And thank you to those who have joined us at Mass, either in person or online, for your flexibility, patience and commitment over these many months. May the coming weeks of Ordinary Time be a time of continued improvement and vitality for our parish community!

Let us pray for one another,

*Fr. Jimmy Jacob*