

May 28, 2021

Dear Friends,

The other day my friend shared a quote, “No matter how good you are, you are still the villain in someone’s story.” I say this because as we have been slowly moving towards opening our church, there are those who either agree with the policies that have been happening, others who don’t and some that just want things to happen at a faster pace. There is no way that I can keep everyone happy when dealing with the pandemic. Everywhere you turn, people are inundated with real and false science, real and false interpretations of the law and even HIPPA. The list goes on and as I said in my letter on Tuesday, my focus has always been the overall safety and mental well-being of everyone who attends St. Matthew’s.

Based upon the guidelines from the Diocese of Paterson and echoing what we are seeing from the State of New Jersey, we are moving forward with changes at St. Matthew the Apostle Parish. As noted on Tuesday, the indoor mask mandate has been lifted in our state for those who are fully vaccinated. If you are fully vaccinated, you may come to mass without a mask. If you are not fully vaccinated or are not ready to enter the building without a mask, please feel free to continue wearing a mask. You will not be questioned. It is not my concern. I hope that you will all do what is best for everyone involved. It is not just what you want but what we can do to help and protect others.

Currently, we will be removing the roping from three of the four sections of pews, so if you have missed “your” pew due to the ropes being up, hopefully you can reunite with it soon . We will continue to maintain social distancing by the fourth section of pews (closest to the tabernacle). Heritage Hall will remain set as it has been for the past few months with groupings of chairs for those who attend mass. Every single one of us is in a different place when it comes to our comfort. We want you to feel as comfortable as possible when entering the building.

Our Holy Water font will be filled. We will be cleaning the font in its entirety each Monday and Friday. When it comes time to receive Holy Communion, we will be adding two additional stations for reception of the Eucharist. Eucharistic Ministers (EM) will be added when they are available and feel comfortable to serve. Before distributing the Eucharist, EM’s will sanitize their hands and wear a mask.

In speaking with our music ministry, we will be moving towards adding congregational singing to masses over the next few weeks. Please be patient with as we work through the logistics.

I will be including the link from the Diocese that lists the full text for the liturgical guidelines for our Diocese. Please do not nitpick the things that we will be doing differently at St. Matthew’s in comparison to what the guidelines state. We are moving towards full implementation of everything suggested over the coming weeks. I am being mindful and moving at a pace to ensure all aspects and procedures are considered. Each

church is unique. Each situation in the church is unique. We are doing what is necessary to ensure that everyone has a level of comfort when visiting St. Matthew's.

On May 20, 2021, the Bishops of the Province of Newark approved lifting the general dispensation from the obligation of Mass effective on the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ, Corpus Christi. Please note the following proviso:

This obligation does not apply to those who are ill; those who have reason to believe that they were recently exposed to the coronavirus or another serious or contagious illness; those who are confined to their home, a hospital, or nursing facility; or those with serious underlying health conditions. One should consult the local pastor if questions arise about the obligation to attend Mass (canon 87).

We will be continuing to livestream daily and weekend mass. The weekend mass livestream schedule is Saturday at 5:00 pm and Sunday at 9:30 am.

Have a safe Memorial Day weekend. As we celebrate with family and friends, please be sure to take a few moments to reflect and remember the meaning of the holiday.

God Bless,
Fr. Brian