

Holy Family Parish—Pandemic Protocol Update

A Message from Father Kevin about the upcoming pandemic protocol changes:

The COVID pandemic has affected so many of us in so many ways. Most of those changes have been unpleasant. However, one of the benefits, when it comes to the practice of our faith, is that we've all been in it together. Each of us likely knows someone who has been seriously ill or worse and we've prayed for them as a community. The Governor of PA and Bishop Zubik have made decisions for our State and Diocese based on the latest learned information and how we need to protect ourselves and others. The latest protocols announced make those of us at Mass now more visibly different. Some are wearing masks, and others are not. Next week, some will be socially distanced in Church and others not. While we're still in this together, we will look different from one another. It's good to keep in mind that everyone has their own individual circumstances and perspectives on this. While we need to keep following the protocols that we've been given, we need to do that with Christian charity, respecting one another before questioning anyone's motives.

Last week, I was at a parish event and we were separated into separate rooms of small groups of eight people each. We were reflecting and discussing a video we watched together that talked about who Jesus was and why he had to die for us. While we were there, I noticed that just a few were wearing a mask and the rest were not. My observation was that it didn't matter who had a mask or who didn't because we were focused on the discussion of Jesus. Our focus was on Jesus Christ, not on what we were wearing.

Over the next several weeks, there may be more protocol changes and ways we will have to adapt. Whatever the next changes are, or how they unfold, when it comes to the practice of our faith and our worship of God, let's try to remain focused on Jesus. The more we do that, the more we'll remain in the challenges together.

I appreciate all those who have adapted so much during these 15 months of almost constant change due to the pandemic, all our liturgical ministers and parishioners in our respect and cooperation with one another. We should be especially thankful to all those behind the scenes who made seating charts every week and weekend so that ushers and greeters would have a starting place for seating people efficiently. Thanks also to our Safety Team who continue to work behind the scenes to help review all the State and Diocesan policies and advise me and our Holy Family Parish through this pandemic.

In Christ's love, Father Kevin

How the most recent protocols will be adapted for us at Holy Family are shared here...

Review of Recent Changes

May 1 - No more temperature scans

Use multiple doors for exiting church

Indoor spaces must only be sanitized once per day

May 15 - Fully Vaccinated need not wear facemasks unless social distance cannot be maintained.

Fully vaccinated is defined as 2 weeks after second dose in a 2 dose series (Pfizer, Moderna) or 2 weeks after a single dose series (J&J)

Protocol Changes beginning May 31

1. Social Distancing is no longer required but we have been encouraged by the Diocese to provide an area for those who continue to want social distancing.

We will begin with half of the church being reserved for social distancing and half unrestricted. We will adapt as we observe how much social distance space is desired.

STI – Section A and cry room will be social distance section

SJAN – Section A and cry room will be social distance section

SJB – Sections A & B, and cry room will be social distance sections

SJV – Sections A & B, and narthex seating will be social distance sections

OLOJ – Sections D & E, and cry room will be social distance sections

2. Ropes will be removed initially in half of the church sections and will remain in those areas described above for social distance seating.

3. Children – Children 2 and under are not required to wear masks, but it's also true that children up to age 12 cannot be vaccinated. So children 3-11 should continue to wear masks in church along with anyone else not fully vaccinated.

4. Adults sitting near children - If a family with children are sitting near other adults not required to wear masks, consider wearing them anyway out of Christian charity.

5. **Cry rooms** – please keep social distance in cry rooms. Since these spaces are for infants and toddlers who cannot be vaccinated yet, social distancing should be observed.
6. **Anyone with a medical condition that is not able to wear a mask**, but not fully vaccinated should still provide a written waiver from an appropriate medical provider.
7. **Pre-registration is discontinued - If you need a special seat – handicap, low gluten hosts, personal seating preference** – This will be like it was before, the first to arrive will have the first choices.
8. **All doors will be open for weekend Masses for entering and exiting.** Those desiring social distancing should continue to enter the doors we have been using at each church. These same doors will be used to usher those socially distanced back outside after services conclude. Those NOT socially distanced wanting to exit that same door will need to wait until those socially distanced have all exited.
9. **Sign in is now optional.** There will be an usher/greeter or at least a sign in sheet where you may enter your name, email and phone, but only if you want to be alerted in the case of a reported positive COVID case. It is preferred that you leave an email address, if you have it, because it's much easier to send one email to a list than to have to call attendees individually. Leaving your name is optional.
10. **Holy Water Fonts may be filled and used.** There is one touchless holy water dispenser at each church location for those who prefer it.
11. **What about the dispensation for the obligation to attend Mass?** The dispensation remains in effect until further notice throughout all the dioceses in Pennsylvania.
12. **Will outside group meetings and non-parish sponsored activities be allowed?** Yes. The Diocese granted us the ability to resume. With all our staff changes, we are working on how to coordinate the reservation, access and clean up of all rented spaces. We hope to begin offering outside group uses in June and will announce when ready.
13. **Offertory collection during Mass will resume.** Offertory baskets with handles will be used at all churches. Note that Our Lady of Joy Church does not currently have such baskets, but we have ordered them.
14. **Offertory processions may resume.** Please consider your willingness to do this and let the usher know if you have a Mass intention relationship for that Mass and would like to bring up gifts of bread & wine. All gift vessels will be covered.
15. **Mission trips may resume as long as all protocols for all areas traveled are observed.**
16. **Priests, deacons, readers, and cantors may continue to remove their masks while speaking or singing while maintaining a social distance from others.** Choirs must continue to maintain social distancing of six feet if removing their masks.
17. **Summer festivals and other non-liturgical events are permitted**, as long as all current COVID protocols are followed. Social distancing is no longer required. Fully vaccinated are free to remove masks. Holy Family Parish is planning our "Almost Back" to normal festival for July 14-17, 2021!
18. **Will we be able to bring back the physical sign of peace?** Not yet. Given that health departments are reporting that the numbers of those vaccinated are not where they want them to be, in a continued interest to protect the health of the faithful, priests and deacons are not to say, "Let us offer each other a sign of peace."
19. **How will we distribute Holy Communion and will we be able to reinstitute Communion under both forms?** Since portions of our Churches are still reserved and observe social distancing, we will continue the current process of distributing one section at a time before advancing to the next section. We are not yet permitted to distribute the Cup to the faithful for continued safety concerns.
20. **Will we be able to hear confessions in confessionals?** Not yet. Due to space constrictions and ventilation challenges, please continue to hear confessions in the spaces you have created.
21. **How will the new state directives impact Faith Formation programs?** Faith formation and religious education programs will operate in alignment with COVID protocols followed in our Catholic schools. In the days ahead, in coordination with the Pennsylvania Department of Health, the Pennsylvania Department of Education will be offering more specific guidance through posting answers to Frequently Asked Questions.
22. **As much as possible, Masses should be held inside the church.** Be aware that once all of the restrictions are lifted, so will the permissions for outside Masses. Until then, Holy Family Parish will offer the "parking lot" Mass at SJB and Holy Communion Distribution Services at SJV and OLOJ Churches.
23. **Parking lot tabernacles.** Since the tabernacles at SJV and OLOJ churches are in doors and we are resuming 100% capacity, we need to move those tabernacles to follow OSHA regulations for clear and safe exit for those inside in case of an emergency. The tabernacle at SJB will remain where it is since it is in a window, and not blocking an exit. We will look into moving the tabernacles at SJV & OLOJ so that they are still visible, but not blocking a doorway.