



12521 Inwood Road
Dallas, TX 75244
stritaparish.net

July 27, 2020

“...O merciful Father, gather to yourself all your children scattered throughout the world.”
-*The Roman Missal*, Eucharistic Prayer III

Dear St. Rita Catholic Community,

I write to you to announce that **we will open our doors for the public Sunday celebration of the Eucharist this coming weekend, beginning with the Vigil Mass at 5:00pm on August 1, 2020.** This has been a long and painful stretch of lonely Sundays. I am happy to gather again. To worship together with brothers and sisters on the Lord's Day is not something I will take for granted ever again.

I want to thank each of you for your patience. As you know, at St. Rita we have practiced abundant caution. It has not been an easy course to chart. Each week the Parish Leadership Team and I would look over the latest COVID-19 data, discuss and sometimes argue logistics and also the spiritual and material good of the community and the city. Also, each week I would reach out to other leaders in the community and on the front lines, seeking their opinion. And then I would pray and frankly twist myself into a decision. To be plain, it has been a difficult process. Which will continue to be, as each week we will still monitor, discuss, and act as necessary during the full length of this pandemic—always serving the best interests of body and soul, both the physical and spiritual good.

But, as I said, I want to thank you *all* for your patience and understanding. With each decision comes both approval and disapproval, criticism and praise, but I am grateful for all of it because it has kept me on the hot seat and has made me engage this crisis with the seriousness it demands. Thus, for those who think I should have opened the doors a long time ago and who have charitably (or almost charitably) told me so, thank you. You have helped me. And similarly, those who have expressed caution and concern (even sometimes about the minutest details), I thank you too. You have helped us serve the entire Parish well. It is simply human that our community should be at times a cacophony of conflicting opinions. Which simply underlines the miracle of God's endless love; which, when I remember that, fills me with love too. Love for every single one of you. So, thank you.

For a while now, we have safely celebrated Mass each day at St. Rita, excluding Sundays. That this has gone well, we feel confident that we can take the next step celebrating Sunday Masses. To achieve this goal—gathering safely on Sundays—it's essential each of us act charitably and responsibly. To that end, please note these new details regarding Sunday Masses at St. Rita:

- There is a new provisional schedule for Sunday Masses:

5:00pm, Saturday (Vigil Mass) (livestreamed and saved on [our YouTube channel](#))
7:00am, Sunday (no music)
9:00am, Sunday
11:00am Sunday
1:00pm Sunday (bilingual)
5:00pm Sunday



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- **You will need to register for the Mass you want to attend.** Registration will open each Wednesday at 5 pm and attendance at each Mass will be capped at 100 persons. The sign up will go out via email through our Flocknote system and will also be available through our website.
- **When you arrive, you must wear a mask at all times.** Please do not take off your mask even when you're sitting in the pew by yourself, or even if you're sitting far away from people. Also, wear your mask properly; that is, your mask should completely cover your mouth and your nose.
- **Please follow all instructions given by Ushers, St. Rita Staff, and Clergy.** We have a good system in place to facilitate worship smoothly and safely. However, cooperation from you is critical. As we begin this process, we will walk you through everything from where to sit to the reception of Holy Communion. Please listen to all instructions and kindly follow them.
- **The 5:00pm Vigil Mass on Saturdays will be livestreamed** via our YouTube channel. For those who are not yet able to attend in person, you can watch during the live stream or view the video anytime afterwards on our YouTube channel, www.youtube.com/stritadallas. If you are in a higher risk category, please consider this option.

Please remember that we are still in a pandemic, and so it's critical we act together in love, cautiously and with concern for the most vulnerable. That is, let us continue to be gentle with one another. If you are at higher risk or if your health is compromised, please be careful and do not carry any sort of guilt about staying away from Mass at this time. Also, when you come, whoever you are, please respect that others around you may be very fearful; they may be just then coming to church for the first time in a while. Thus, please respect other people's experience by keeping your distance, wearing your mask, and speaking kindly and gently, always. We must respect and accommodate the other person rather than demand the other person accommodate us; this is what St. Paul called "forbearance," better known as patience, and it's one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22). And we should pray to bear that fruit—each of us, every day.

As we open our doors to re-gather as followers of Christ on the Lord's Day, let us thank God for the gift of such worship. Also, let us think of the spiritual work we do on behalf of the world when we go Mass. To worship the true God, in Christian thought, is the first act of justice—to offer God the praise which is his due. And it's an act of justice which trains us to act justly; for paying God what is his due, we slowly learn how to offer others what they are due, which is the love of Christ. Which is why the Church bids us to go to Mass regularly because we're so sinfully slow to learn. It's a lesson we need Sunday by Sunday. But it changes the world, slowly but very surely, for the better. This, history makes clear. The sacrifice of the Mass makes the world more just because it's worship that forms Christians to act justly in the world. And so, looking out on a world clearly in need of justice, a world crying for love, we Christians know where to begin—at the altar of God, for the peace Christ gives us.

Again, thank you. And again, I love you all. And I'm humbled and blessed to serve God's Church as a priest of Jesus Christ. And I'm humbled too to serve St. Rita Catholic Community. Please pray for me, as I pray for you. See you Sunday.

pax,
Fr. Joshua J. Whitfield
Pastoral Administrator