

Directives for Return to Public Mass

General Principles

- Our first consideration must continue to be for the spiritual and physical health of our parishioners and those whom they encounter, especially the most vulnerable: the elderly and those with chronic illnesses. We continue to rely on medical professionals and governmental standards to inform these directives.
- The Obligation to attend Sunday Mass and Holy Days of Obligation continues to be suspended as long as the pandemic continues.
- All COVID-19 positive persons, those who are symptomatic, and those living with them, must stay home.
- Persons over age 65 and those with pre-existing health conditions should continue to stay home during Phase II and avoid public gatherings, including in church.
- Parishes should continue to broadcast or live-stream liturgies for the benefit of the homebound and those otherwise vulnerable and unable to attend in person.
- The course of the Liturgical Year is to be maintained and the primacy of Sunday is to be respected, even for those unable to attend in person. If social distancing restrictions make attending Sunday Mass impossible or inadvisable, the faithful may consider instead attending Mass on a weekday with smaller crowds, and it is usually permissible (according to the Ordo) to use the Sunday liturgy texts on weekdays.
- Every parish must develop and implement a COVID-19 Preparedness Plan and designate and train a staff person to be the Plan Administrator. While there are many aspects of the Plan that fall outside these Directives on liturgy (staff safety procedures, work-at-home guidelines, etc.) the plan- including the name and contact information of the Plan Administrator- should be publicized to the entire parish online and in common gathering areas. **Patti Fodstad-Bouley will be the Plan Administrator for St John's.**

Guidelines for the First Sunday Back

- Encourage parishioners to wear masks and bring hand sanitizer.
- Liturgical ministers in the sanctuary need not wear face masks during Mass, provided they remain more than 6 feet apart, but should wear them when distributing Communion outside of Mass.
- Do not use altar servers. **Only Father Yanta will be allowed in the Sanctuary - no one else will be allowed in the Sanctuary for safety reasons.**
- Congregational singing is to be temporarily discontinued, since singing expels many more respiratory particles than speaking does. Instead, use soloists or instrumental music. Choirs are discontinued until it is safe to resume.
- Processions through the assembly at the beginning and end of Mass need not occur, especially if the priest or other ministers are in a high-risk category.
- Do not "pass the plate" for the collection; use (and regularly clean) long- handled baskets or invite the faithful to drop their offerings into a large container on the way in/out of church. Encourage online donations.
- Do not offer the Sign of Peace using any physical contact and do not hold hands during the Lord's Prayer.
- A concluding hymn is not required in the Order of Mass; consider omitting it. Instead of heading for the exits as a group, the faithful may leave at their own pace, before or after distribution of Communion outside of Mass.

Safety and Hygiene in Our Worship Spaces

- Weather permitting, prop doors open to minimize touch, and open windows to maximize air circulation.
- Designate certain doors “Entrance only” or Exit only” to reduce social proximity.
- High use areas in the church should be wiped down with disinfectant before and after each liturgy, especially pews, chairs, ambos, handrails, doorknobs, and push plates.
- Hymnals, missalettes, and other commonly held items (e.g. children’s toys) should be removed and stored during the pandemic.
- You may print bulletins, but do not have anyone hand them out. The faithful may pick up their own copies on the way out of church. Better, provide them electronically.

Social Distancing within the Church

- During Phase II, the maximum number of persons admitted into a church building is limited to 25% of the total seating capacity, or 250 persons, whichever is less.
- Each person must remain 6 feet away in all directions from others not in the same household. This also applies to chapels and other rooms on site. Depending on its layout, in some cases less than 25% of the church may be able to be occupied.
- Tape or rope off every other, or two of every three, pews and put tape or markers where people may/may not sit. **We will plan for every third pew to begin with.**
- Face mask are strongly urged for all assembly members (but not for those under age two, according to the CDC, since it may put them at risk of suffocation).
- Priests are encouraged to celebrate Mass out-of-doors where, according to the MN Department of Public Health, the likelihood of passing infection is reduced and the need for sanitization are minimal.
 - 1- Outdoor celebrations give an added sense of security especially to senior citizens who may judge it safer to remain within their vehicles.
 - 2- Where the location can accommodate vehicles, people may remain inside their vehicles. There is no limit to how many may participate from inside vehicles.
 - 3- There may not be more than 250 persons outside of vehicles at an outdoor Mass.

Reception of Holy Communion

- Distributing Holy Communion is a delicate topic. We must ensure reverence for the Blessed Sacrament yet retain social distance. After consulting theologians and medical professionals, we have decided that distribution of Communion after Mass would pose less health risk because it allows for greater social distancing.
 1. When the number of communicants is more than 10, Communion is distributed during Mass only to those few ministers in the sanctuary. The remaining faithful will be offered Communion after Mass following the protocols below.
 2. When the number of communicants is less than 10, Communion may be distributed within Mass, always maintaining proper social distancing.
 3. Reconsider the location and flow for the distribution of Holy Communion.
 4. Use markers on the floor or the ends of pews to demarcate six-foot intervals in the Communion Procession.
 5. The Precious Blood is not distributed to the faithful from the Chalice, except for those whose health does

not permit receiving even a low-gluten host; in such a case a separate small Chalice may be used for the communicant only.

6. The Communion distributor and the communicant should each apply hand sanitizer before and after Communion and wear face masks except when consuming the host.

7. The faithful should receive Communion in the hand. The Communion distributor and the communicant should extend hands to keep as much distance as possible between them and keep hands still to avoid inadvertent touching.

8. Those unable to receive Communion in the hand may discuss the matter with the pastor to seek an alternative (e.g. someone living in the same household could be delegated as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion).

9. Wearing gloves to distribute Communion is not permitted, nor is using tongs or other instruments, plastic baggies, cups, pre-packaged containers, or any other unapproved vessels.

10. The faithful may not wear gloves when receiving Communion in the hand, nor receive it in a paper tissue, plate, cup, or other disposable item.

Distributing Holy Communion Outside of Mass

- If they were wearing them, priests and deacons remove chasubles and dalmatics, take a ciborium from the tabernacle, and bring it to the Communion station table. ***Father Yanta will remove chasuble and wash hands in sacristy for more than 20 seconds with soap and hot water.**

- The faithful approach at each Communion station, keeping 6 feet from all others (including those in adjacent lines); observe the floor markers, they will take some hand sanitizer before approaching Father Yanta.

- **Father Yanta will hold up the host and through the face mask says, "The Body of Christ" The communicant standing arms out stretched and with hands laying flat like an altar to receive (not take) replies "Amen".**

After receiving Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, the communicant steps to the side six feet and receives Holy Communion. (If you are wearing face mask, this is when you should remove the mask, six feet away to the side of Father.)

At this point you will immediately exit the Church following the instructions given.

We ask you to go directly to your vehicle, please no gathering.

- If a minister has touched the hand or mouth of a communicant, immediately after distributing to that communicant, the minister puts the ciborium on the table and re-sanitizes his hands before distributing to the next communicant. **(This is why it will be so important to let Father place Jesus on the palm of your hand. You do not need to do anything but give him a flat platform of your hand, stretch straight out from your body, and held there. Father will place Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament onto your hand, you are receiving not taking.)**

- After receiving, communicants may depart immediately, **(if people want to return and pray, they may do so after going directly to their vehicle and returning after Holy Communion is done.)**

Note: We will need a team for clean-up and ushering please consider giving of yourself for this, especially if younger. Most of our volunteers are over 65 years of age. This is a good chance for our younger parishioners to take active ownership in the parish and serve. If you are able to help sanitize following Mass or as an usher, please call the parish office at 763-428-2828.