



Saint John Bosco Church

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In the first reading today for the Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord, I am struck by the fact that the Apostles still don't get it! Even after traveling with Jesus for 3 years, witnessing his mighty deeds and wondrous teachings, even after seeing him suffer and die and witnessing his resurrection, they are still asking the wrong question: "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" I am struck, but I am also comforted, because it shows us that from the earliest days of the Church, we have always been figuring it out as we go!

As we prepare to reopen for Masses this week, there's sure to be some of that: the plans that we have laid out for resuming public worship during the Covid-19 pandemic have been the fruit of much discussion, guidance received from governmental and ecclesial officials, and they are the best plans we could come up with as a staff, but they are sure to change as we try to implement them and more information continues to come in. Nonetheless, let me share with you the current plan in three parts:

Before Mass:

1. Please understand that the obligation to attend Mass on Sunday continues to be lifted. This means that if you are at an increased risk of infection because of age or pre-existing condition, you ought to stay home. Likewise, if you are a possible non-symptomatic carrier, please stay home. To allow you to still maintain some connection with the parish even from home, I will continue to live-stream our Masses.
2. As happy as we will be to see each other again, I am going to discourage you from congregating in the entryways of the Church. Our ushers are ready and willing to help you find the next available pew (and I beg you not to worry if it's not your normal pew!), and I ask you to remain in that pew!
3. You will notice some additions to our Church: hand sanitizing dispensers at every entrance. Please use these upon entering, and keep your fingers away from your face!

4. Even though they are uncomfortable and unsightly, *masks are required*. Let's keep our breath to ourself until this is all behind us.
5. Despite the plentiful signs around the building reminding you to keep doors closed, we will be intentionally propping doors so that less hands have to touch these surfaces.
6. Even though we are not in the habit of "passing" the basket, the offertory collection has been strongly discouraged. Instead, you are asked to leave your offering in one of the baskets on the way into Church.
7. Although I never stopped celebrating the Sacrament of Penance (I was scheduling confessions by appointment), we will return to Saturday confessions, but not in the confessional. Because it would not be feasible to disinfect the confessional after each visitor, we will utilize the more spacious Holy Family Room for the forgiveness of sins starting on Saturday at 3:00. While there is no light to change from red to green, we will follow the open door policy: if the door's closed, that means you should wait for the penitent to exit.

During Mass:

1. We will begin the summer vacation for our Children's Liturgy of the Word catechists early. I do this in part to protect them, but also because I look forward to hearing your children praise the Lord as only they can. I think what I missed most during all these private Masses has been the noise of young children!
2. Until we have this novel virus contained, we are minimizing the risk of transmission at Mass. To that end, we will refrain from offering each other the sign of peace. Instead, we'll all relish the peace that Jesus gives us!
3. For the reception of Holy Communion:
 - A. To avoid a line, our ushers will let you out one pew at a time.
 - B. To avoid traffic jams, the routes to communion are temporarily amended so that every aisle flows in the same direction.
 - C. Please leave your mask on until you are ready to receive (and see the video on our facebook page for how to do this without contaminating the minister and subsequent communicant).
 - D. Even if it is not your preference, you are asked to receive the Eucharist on the hand for the near future. If you insist on receiving on the tongue, please notify the ushers of your preference, and you will receive from me at the end of the Communion Rite.
 - E. Communion will only be given under one species.

After Mass:

1. Before you vacate your pew, I am asking each household to disinfect your pew (and kneeler and hand rest) and dispose of the used towel in the appropriate receptacle. Joe and his crew will thoroughly sanitize the remainder of the building at the start of each week.
2. Similar to your coming to Church, we will avoid congregating after Mass. Please wait for the ushers to dismiss your pew, and make your way outside.

And more...

I hope we can focus on the overwhelming good news that we're coming back to Mass, because I do have some tough news to share. I had to make the difficult decision, after consulting with diocesan executives, health officials, and the captains of the event, to cancel the International Festival this August. I had heard nothing but rave reviews regarding the festival, but for the safety of our volunteers and possible attendees, I feel this is the most prudent course. I look forward to partying doubly hard from August 12-15, 2021!

I know that this is a lot to take in all at once, and these measures will try our patience. I thank you in advance for your cooperation with them, and, as mentioned earlier, I am sure we will tinker with these protocols as we go.

Yours in Christ,
Fr. Matt Byrne
Administrator

APPENDIX: Communion Procession During Coronavirus

