

June 2, 2021

Dear Parishioners of St. Joan of Arc,

As we move forward as a nation through, and hopefully out of, the recent pandemic, be assured of my continued prayers for you and your families. I pray especially for those directly affected by the virus or have suffered a loss in this time. I am also very appreciative of your patience and charity in this past year regarding state and diocesan protocols. As with any policies that are intended to serve a large group such as a parish, there will always be a spectrum of comfort levels with specific details. I have done my best to provide for our parish, policies that are in line with State and Diocesan policies. Again, I thank you for your understanding.

As you are aware, Governor DeWine announced on May 14 that effective June 2, all health orders regarding the Corona Virus will be removed. As with the initial protocols, Bishop Brennan and the bishops of Ohio, put forth policies in line with the Governor's. Therefore, beginning June 2nd, masks and social distancing will no longer be required at St. Joan of Arc. Again, I'm confident that there will likewise be a spectrum of comfort levels regarding these changes. I want to remain consistent in following the guidance of our Governor and Bishop. In line with this announcement, the Bishops of Ohio have decided that the general dispensation from the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation is no longer necessary. The Sunday and Holy Day obligations will return effective June 5-6, 2021. In their letter dated May 13, 2021, the Bishops of Ohio remind us that:

“As has always been the case, those who have a serious reason are exempt from attending Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation (Catechism of the Catholic Church 2181). This includes those who are ill, have significant health risk factors or care for someone who is immune-compromised or ill, as well as those who have SIGNIFICANT FEAR OR ANXIETY OF CONTRACTING THE CORONAVIRUS in a large group of persons.”

On a practical note, know that the color coding of pews will no longer be used, all pews will be available at each mass. Likewise masks will not be required. If you wish to wear a mask because of personal concerns, of course that is acceptable. I continue to ask for your respectful charity with one another, especially guests to our parish. Questioning someone regarding the wearing or not wearing of masks, or certainly their vaccine status, is not appropriate at any time.

Moving forward, the 9:30 Sunday mass will continue to be live streamed out to the community each week. Live streaming into the Social Hall will no longer be provided. The extra chairs will remain in the Narthex until the weekend of August 28/29. I ask that these chairs remain available for those who still are more comfortable with extra space. The Narthex furniture will return in September.

As for general use of the facilities, since the building is normally closed to groups during the month of July, we are asking that regular use of the building for meetings and activities resume in August. Calendar planning will begin in mid June. Please look for further information around this time in regards to facility use requests.

As of the writing of this letter, Bishop Brennan has not given directives regarding such details as the return of the Sign of Peace, Holy Water in the fonts, etc. This information, and other details, will be made available as soon as possible through the bulletin, parish website and social media such as Flocknote. If you are not currently receiving Flocknote via your email or text and wish to do so, please contact the parish office.

Thank you for your faithfulness through these difficult times. I genuinely look forward to returning to worship in a manner with which we are accustomed. May God bless all of you and let us keep one another in prayer.

Fr. James Black
Pastor