

Easter and spring are both times of renewal, reawakening, and hope. Likewise, our parish is emerging back to life a year after the start of the pandemic. As vaccination rates continue to climb, more members of our parish family feel comfortable returning to in-person Mass. The members of St. Joseph's Reopening Committee are excited to welcome individuals back. The Committee would also like to take this opportunity to remind parishioners of the guidelines that need to be followed so that we can safely worship together as the fight against the spread of COVID-19 continues. These guidelines apply to all parishioners (non-vaccinated and vaccinated):

- Doors will open approximately 30 minutes before mass. All parishioners need to present their completed Attestation Form to one of the Greeters inside Holy Family Hall.
- All parishioners must wear face coverings from the time they leave their car to enter the Church to when they exit the Church at the conclusion of Mass.
- Social distancing must be adhered to. To practice proper distancing, all parishioners must keep at least 6 feet between themselves and other individuals not from their household.
- Seating will be limited and admission will be on a first come, first-served basis (*please be on time*).
- Ushers will escort parishioners to their seat, to communion, and to the exit at the conclusion of Mass. Individuals from the same household who arrive together may sit together.
- Use hand sanitizer upon entering church, before and after communion (please try to bring your own).
- Please leave any unnecessary items at home.
- Offertory donations may be placed in the collection box as you enter church (*there will be no passing of the basket*).
- We ask that parishioners refrain from singing. Guidelines have been adjusted to allow the cantor to sing while masked.
- No physical Sign of Peace (verbal only).
- Eucharist to be received in the hand only (*hold hand out flat*) and please step to the side before lifting mask to consume Eucharist.
- Except for communion, parishioners should please remain at their seat if at all possible. An usher will be assigned to each section should a problem arise.

Those of you that have been fully vaccinated against COVID-19, or scheduled to receive the vaccine in the near future, may have the following questions:

When am I considered fully vaccinated? According to CDC guidelines, individuals are considered fully vaccinated 2 weeks (14 days) after their second dose in a 2-dose series (i.e., Pfizer or Moderna vaccines), OR 2 weeks (14 days) after a single-dose vaccine (i.e., Johnson & Johnson vaccine). If an individual has not met these requirements, they are NOT considered fully vaccinated.

Why do I still need to wear a face covering during Mass? Scientists and health professionals are still learning how vaccines impact the spread of COVID-19. Though vaccination rates continue to increase, many in our community are unvaccinated and remain at a higher risk for the infection. The Reopening Committee, in accordance with CDC and Diocesan guidelines, asks that fully vaccinated parishioners continue to wear masks and practice social distancing.

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Can I reduce the amount of distance between myself and other parishioners? The New York State Dept. of Health recently released guidelines allowing Pre-K to Grade 12 schools to shift from 6-foot distancing to 3-foot distancing once certain conditions have been met. These guidelines apply only to schools and they state that a 6-foot distance will always be required between adults. The Reopening Committee, in accordance with CDC and Diocesan guidelines, asks that fully vaccinated parishioners continue to keep at least 6 feet between themselves and other individuals not from their household.

Can I attend Church if I've been around someone who has COVID-19? According to CDC guidelines, fully vaccinated individuals exposed to someone who has COVID-19 do not need to stay away from others (i.e., quarantine) or get tested unless they experience symptoms. However, if an individual lives or works in a group setting (e.g., group home, nursing home, correctional or detention facility) and are around someone who has COVID-19, the CDC recommends the individual still stay away from others for 14 days and get tested, even if they don't have symptoms. Also, the Bishop's dispensation allows individuals not comfortable attending Mass to remain at home and participate via online recordings, live-stream masses.

Please note that these safety practices and policies are intended to keep our communities safe during the ongoing pandemic. Each Church has their own Reopening Committee to determine what is best for their respective communities. Once infection rates decline and herd immunity is achieved, these rules may change allowing us to return to regular church worship and activities. Thank you for your understanding, patience, and continued support of St. Joseph's. If you have any questions related to safety policies and procedures, please free feel to contact Debbie Griffith at 518-810-8911.

Sincerely,

Trustees: Carol Reynolds and Tom Neals

St. Joseph's Reopening Committee Members:

Debbie Griffith

Audra Hanley, MD

Patty Johnson, RN

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