

ST. BARTHOLOMEW PARISH – NEEDHAM, MASSACHUSETTS

RETURNING TO THE CELEBRATION OF HOLY MASS

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

It has been some time since we have gathered together as a community for the celebration of Holy Mass. In the past few months we have come to realize that there is not much in our world that is as it used to be. One thing is for certain, however, and this is that Jesus Christ remains the same. He remains Lord of our heaven and earth forever. As we prepare to come together as a community again, however, we need to realize that the manner in which we gather will have to undergo some changes. This is to ensure the safety of all in our parish and in our community. What you will find below is a guide to help you to know what to do before coming to Mass and what to expect when you arrive. I hope this will be helpful to you and I look forward to seeing each of you as time permits.

Fr. Derek

SHOULD I COME TO MASS?

- Please remember that Cardinal Seán has extended the dispensation from the Sunday obligation during these days. For that reason, anyone who is uncomfortable, in any way, returning to a group setting for Mass should feel free not to come to Mass.
- In a special way anyone who is in a high risk group such as, but not limited to, being over 65 years of age, heart conditions, respiratory issues and diabetes, should continue to remain at home and join the community from there. We will still be live-streaming the 9:45 Mass on our [Facebook page](#) as well as the [parish website](#). CatholicTV is also offering Mass online and on television on Comcast at 268 or Verizon at 296 or on their website www.catholictv.org.
- If you are not feeling well on a given day, especially if you are running a fever or have a cough, you should stay home. This holds true for times when we are not dealing with a pandemic as well!

BEFORE COMING TO MASS

- While we are permitted to have 40% of our capacity in the church, when we put social distancing protocols into effect, the number of people we are able to have at each Mass is much lower, and we very well may not be able to accommodate everyone every weekend. If this is the case, I ask your patience. Trying to guess how many people will want to be at a given Mass is probably the most difficult part of this venture. There are many variables: How many will chose to keep their distance at this time? Our attendance typically drops in the summer as people go away for vacation, but will this summer be different? How many individuals and how many families will be at a given Mass? And so on.
- For this reason, if you are planning to come to Mass, I am asking you to “reserve” a space at SignUp Genius by clicking the link on the [parish website](#). If you are coming in a group of more than one, please be sure to indicate this by changing the number where it says, “Quantity.” If you do not have Internet access, please call the parish office at 781-444-3434 and we will be happy to assist you with this.
 - I will plan to have, on Mondays, a link on the parish website to the sign up for the following Sunday’s Masses.
 - Please note that, on account of the limited space in the crying rooms, we will be able to accommodate only one family in each room at each Mass. For sanitary reasons, please do not bring food into the crying rooms.
 - As I mentioned before, it is very likely we will be unable to accommodate everyone who wants to be at Mass on a given weekend. For this reason I would ask, in a spirit of Christian charity, if you go to Mass on one weekend, wait until later in the week to sign up for the following week’s Masses, giving those who weren’t able to go the opportunity to sign up.

- To avoid unnecessarily touching any surfaces, **we will not make paper bulletins available on Sundays.** I encourage you to consider accessing the weekly bulletin online at the [parish website](#) or consider having it emailed to you directly from Pilot Publishing. You can sign up here: <http://www.pilotbulletins.net/sign-up/>
- **Be sure to bring your face covering / mask with you.** Masks must be worn by all in attendance except for those under the age of two and those who cannot wear them for medical reasons. Parents may make a determination whether children from two to five years of age must wear one.
- In addition to your mask, you may want to bring some hand sanitizer with you. There is hand sanitizer in a pump bottle available at the doors of the church, but you may feel more comfortable with your own.
- Hymnals have been removed from the pews. If you wish to follow along with the readings, you should use your phone to access them or print them out ahead of time and bring them with you. The readings for Masses can be found here: <http://www.usccb.org/bible/> and clicking on the appropriate date.
- **We will not be taking up a collection during Mass, but baskets will be at the doors of the church to leave your offering upon departure.** If you are making a cash offering, please put it in an envelope and note on the envelope if it is for the regular offertory or for a special collection. For offerings by check, please note this in the memo line. I would, once again, encourage you to look into **online giving** which you can do here: <http://stbartholomew-needham.org/donate/> . Many people find this process much easier.
- **Please leave plenty of time to get to Mass early.** This will assist us in helping everyone to be seated safely and with proper social distancing protocols. As you will see below, all people will be entering through the side door, so arriving early will minimize distractions during Mass.

YOUR ARRIVAL AT THE CHURCH

- **Before exiting your car, please be sure to put your mask on, making sure it covers your mouth *and* nose.**
- Avoid socializing with anyone in the parking lot.
- In order to ensure that entrance into the church is done orderly and safely, and that we do not have too many people in the church, everyone is asked to enter through the side door. Here, having registered at SignUp Genius, you will be able to “check in” with a volunteer.
- Upon entering the side door you will notice that **our aisles are one-way.** The side aisles are for traffic going from the front of the church to the back. The center aisle is for traffic going from the back of the church to the front.
- You will notice that certain pews have tape on them blocking them off. This is to provide appropriate distance from one pew to the next. **Please sit in a pew that is not taped off and move towards the center of the pew.** This will prevent the need for you to move in if someone arrives after you or for them to have to “climb over” you to get to the middle.
- Within each pew, you will see tape markings. These markings designate a distance of six feet from one to another. Individuals should make sure that there is a distance of six feet between them and another person / group. Families who live in the same dwelling can sit together.

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING MASS

- For the time being, Mass will be a little different than we are used to.
- **For the foreseeable future, everyone at Mass will be asked NOT to sing.** As you may have become aware, singing projects our breath more than simple speaking, and has the possibility of spreading germs further. Because we can sometimes be on “auto pilot,” in order to assist you with this we will recite the Gloria as well as the Mass parts that we usually sing.

- There will be no procession at the beginning of Mass. The lector will already be seated and the priest will come into the sanctuary from the sacristy. Please note that the lector, cantor and priest will not be wearing masks while performing their functions in the sanctuary. The priest will put on a mask for the distribution of Communion.
- After the Universal Prayers (Prayers of the Faithful), there will not be a collection taken up. Again, there will be baskets at the doors of the church where you can leave your offering on the way out.
- There will also not be a procession with the bread and wine. Everything for the Liturgy of the Eucharist will be in the sanctuary already.
- Please do not extend hands to others while praying the Our Father.
- The invitation to exchange a sign of peace with those around us will, for the time being, be omitted.

HOLY COMMUNION

For many the reception of Holy Communion has been deeply missed during these days. For some, there may be a sense of anxiety over the possible spread of contagion. Everyone is reminded that it is not *necessary* that one receive Communion at Mass. In years gone by, people received very infrequently. There is no judgment on someone who chooses not to receive Holy Communion at Mass. During the Communion Rite, you are asked to follow these guidelines:

- The priest will be the only one distributing Holy Communion and he will wear a mask at this point.
- For the time being, the Archdiocese of Boston has restricted the distribution of Communion to be received only in the hand.
- The Precious Blood will not be distributed.
- Please exit your pew into the center aisle.
- **If you are wearing gloves, please remove them for the reception of Communion. Keep your mask on while going up to Communion.**
- If you are not going to receive Holy Communion, we would ask that you still come forward in procession so that others who are in the pew are able to exit without any unnecessary contact. Once you have arrived at the head of the aisle, you may simply step aside and return to your seat.
- Form ONE line in the center aisle. Do not empty both sides of the pews at the same time. You will notice that the pews are a bit staggered. Begin with the side on the LEFT as you are facing the front of the church. When the left pew has emptied, the next pew on the right may proceed, and so on.
- Look for marks on the floor designating distances of six feet between you and the person in front of you.
- There will be a mark on the floor where you should stand to receive Communion.
- **When extending your hands to receive Communion, please do not rush.** Let us conduct ourselves as reverently and carefully as possible, mindful that this is the Body of Christ that we are receiving. This will also help reduce the risk of personal contact when Communion is being distributed.
 - Place your right hand under your left.
 - Keep your hands as flat as possible, yet relaxed. Try not to make your hands too stiff or the Host may slide off. **Do not cup your hands or curl your fingers** as this increases the possibility of the priest's hand coming in contact with yours.
 - The Host will be placed in your hand.
 - **Step aside to where there is another marker. Lower your mask with your right hand and then pick up the Host and place it in your mouth. Replace your mask and walk back to your seat.** *As a*

reminder, even under normal circumstances we should always consume the Host within sight of the person who has distributed it to us. We should never walk away with the Host in our hands.

- Parents, it would be a good idea to practice this with children ahead of time.
- As you are returning to your seat, there will be hand sanitizer available along the way should you need some.
- During Masses at which the organ is being played, the Communion procession will be in silence since the seating area of the organ is within six feet of where people will be moving to return to their seats.

AT THE CONCLUSION OF MASS

- The priest will not recess through the center aisle as usual but will simply return to the sacristy.
- It is customary to make a prayer of thanksgiving at the conclusion of Mass. In these days, all are still encouraged to do so, but are asked to limit your prayer to a couple of minutes so that the cleaning of the church for the next Mass can begin.
- While you may be seeing people that you have not seen in a while during the time of Masses being suspended, please avoid socializing in the church or in the parking lot. It is important that our team of volunteers have enough time to clean and sanitize high-touch areas of the church before the next Mass.
- Remove everything from the pew as you leave. Please do not leave any used gloves.
- When leaving the church, you may depart from either the side or the back doors. Please maintain the one-way flow of traffic in the aisles in an orderly fashion, observing social distancing. Use the side aisles to get the back of the church, the center aisle to get to the front. For some, for example, if you are seated by the wall nearest St. Sebastian's, and you want to exit the side door, you may have to either wait for others to leave the pew to get to the center aisle or take the side aisle to the back of the church and then proceed up the center aisle.
- If you expect that you will need to hold on to the railing to ascend the stairs at the back of the church, you may want to consider exiting through the side door.

A VERY PRACTICAL MATTER

- Some people tend to use the bathrooms at St. Sebastian's. I'm going to ask you not to do that for the foreseeable future as there are a number of bathrooms over there and we simply do not have the ability to clean them all in between the Masses.
- I anticipate that for the time being, on account of less congregational singing, fewer people at each Mass, and a shorter homily, Masses will be shorter than we are used to. Hopefully that will help out.

PLEASE REMEMBER:

If at any time you are diagnosed with COVID-19, please be sure to inform the parish if you have been to Mass. Don't forget that a person can be contagious without manifesting symptoms and it will be necessary for us to inform the Needham Board of Health that someone who was at one of our Masses has tested positive in that situation.

Thank you all for your understanding, cooperation and patience during these very "novel" times for us as a parish community. May God bless you all.