

Easing Back to Normal

My Dear Parish Family,

On Monday, June 7, Bishop Barbarito issued a statement (and a video) regarding “getting back to normal” in our parishes beginning June 19/20. [You can find the letter and video on the Diocese’s [website](#).] As a parish of the Diocese of Palm Beach, we have always tried to follow the Bishop’s directives regarding the protocols and procedures of keeping everyone safe during the COVID-19 pandemic. As the Bishop is now “relaxing the pandemic safety restrictions,” we will also follow his lead. What does that mean for St. Paul of the Cross?

First of all, it means that we will see some changes soon – as early as June 19/20 – and others will come over time. Second, it means that we need to continue to care for one another as we navigate through the changes that are coming as we “relax the pandemic safety restrictions.” Finally, it means that we may need to continue to be patient as we await the particular changes for which each one of us might hope. At St. Paul of the Cross, we are phasing in some of the changes in order to be sure that everyone remains safe.

Prudence and Concern for Our Neighbors

Throughout this pandemic, we have been encouraging everyone to practice the virtue of prudence in their choices. Prudence is “identifying what is truly good for us.” When we speak of prudence, we are talking about what is truly good for ALL of us, not just oneself.

We ask that you continue to apply the virtue of prudence as we enact the new protocols for our parish found in this note. We also ask that you show concern for others by (1) being sensitive to others’ concerns, since you do not know their particular health situation, and (2) being kind to those who may have different comfort levels with these new procedures and protocols.

Masks and Social Distancing

During the time when COVID-19 was spreading throughout the area, our Parish and Diocese helped keep our parishioners as safe as possible by following the recommended guidelines of masks and social distancing. Now that many people are vaccinated and the threat of a resurgence has diminished greatly, the CDC has adjusted its recommendations regarding masks and social distancing. Along with the rest of the Diocese, we will follow the new guidelines. Beginning the weekend of June 19/20, we will no longer REQUIRE masks or social distancing in the Church.

However, as mentioned above, I would like for all of us to be prudent, both for ourselves and for our brothers and sisters in the parish. In this regard, I would like to encourage people to continue to wear masks (especially those who are unvaccinated or who suffer from health risks). I would also like to encourage everyone to try to keep social distance, especially when choosing a seat at Mass. We wouldn’t want to make someone else feel uncomfortable by sitting right next to or behind them, if we could easily choose a seat that leaves some space.

Also, I am asking that those who distribute the Eucharist (clergy and EMHCs) wear a mask and use hand sanitizer before distributing the Eucharist.

REMEMBER: Both masks and hand sanitizers will continue to be made available at the doors of the Church for anyone who needs to avail oneself of them.

Church Doors, Processions and Liturgical Ministries

With the new rules for our liturgies, processions will return to our parish in their normal form beginning June 19/20. What this means is that the priest, deacon and other ministers will process from the vestibule, instead of the sacristy.

In addition, the front doors of the church will be open on that same weekend, so that you will be able enter from the front of the Church, in addition to the side doors. In order to maintain social distancing, we ask that people not congregate in the vestibule. Also, we will continue to keep our chapel closed for the time being (except for overflow from the main nave of the Church), so the chapel doors will remain locked at this time.

Over the last several months, we have been able to include more participation in liturgical ministries, as long as we were able to keep the participants safe. It is important for our parish that we have parishioners involved in our liturgies, so we will continue to increase participation in our liturgical ministries, as we are able to do so reasonably and safely.

Bishop's Dispensation Removed

Since the beginning of the pandemic, the Bishop has given to each of us a dispensation from the Sunday and Holy Day Mass obligation. In his June 7th letter to the faithful, the Bishop announced his removal of this dispensation. To use his words, "However, one may still excuse oneself from attending Mass for reasons of health, tending to an infirm person, or out of concern for contracting or spreading an illness."

At this time, we are continuing to offer Sunday Mass and Daily Reflections on our YouTube Channel for those who are unable to or who feel uncomfortable with coming to Mass.

Private Prayer

The Bishop has also given us permission to open our Adoration Chapel. Therefore, our Adoration Chapel will be open again during our regular Office Hours; M-F 9-5 and Weekends 9-1. Since the Adoration Chapel will be open, we will no longer need to leave the Church open for private prayer. Only two people should be in the Adoration Chapel at any time, and the same encouragement for wearing masks applies in the Adoration Chapel.

As usual, Our Lady's Grotto is open 24 hours a day for prayer. Our Blessed Mother waits for you to pray with her.

Parish Office and Religious Shop

The Religious Shop and the Parish Office will continue to be open during their regular hours. The encouragement for wearing masks and social distancing also applies to the Parish Office and the Religious Shop.

Our religious shop will be open Monday through Saturday, 10 AM – 1 PM, as well as before and after Mass on Saturday, and on Sunday, 8 AM – 12 Noon. Stop by and get books and religious articles for yourself or someone you love.

The Parish Office hours are M-F 9 AM to 5 PM and Sat & Sun. 9 AM to 1 PM. You may call or visit the office during those times. Of course, if you have an emergency need for a priest, please feel free to call anytime.

As the vestibule of the Church will be open again, we will have someone stationed at the Welcome Desk on Sunday mornings.

Ministries and Facilities

We would like to remind our ministry groups that we were able to allow ministry meetings a few months ago. Due to the new changes in social distancing requirements, we have been able to increase the capacities of each of the meeting rooms. However, at this time, we must continue to restrict the sharing of food at meetings. If you have any questions, please contact the Parish Office for specifics regarding your ministry's meeting.

It's OUR Parish Family; Let's Show Our Love for One Another

You are a part of our parish family, and just as each of you works to keep your family safe, so do we. That was the reason for the restrictions being put into place in March 2020, and it is the reason that we are "**easing** back to normal" now.

You can stay up to date on the parish by checking out our website [paulcross.org] and reading our bulletin [paulcross.org/bulletins]. You can also visit us on social media through our Facebook account @paulcrossNPB or follow this [link](#).

Please know that you are always in the prayers of the clergy and staff of St. Paul of the Cross, and we ask for your prayers too.

We Are a Community; We Are a Family; We Are St. Paul of the Cross.

Fr. Tom