

Pastor's Message for the Weekend of June 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>

Dear Parishioners of Holy Trinity and Holy Spirit:

Greetings to all of you. I am writing this message on Sunday, May 31<sup>st</sup> in the middle of the afternoon. I hope that you have been able to enjoy the sunshine that we were blessed with this past week. I think that it serves as a reminder of the blessings from God that we are given even in the midst of a pandemic.

I want to bring you up to speed a little on some of the developments that have taken place since we have last been able to gather for public Masses (March 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup>). As you may or may not know, when we are given clearance by our diocesan bishop for public Masses to take place again, we will need to be as flexible as possible with one another to work with the temporary "new normal" regarding the prevention of the spread of COVID-19. I thank you in advance for helping us as much as possible. Please stay tuned to future bulletins for more updates as they come in.

When we are given permission to resume public Masses (at a date to be announced by the bishop and us), the Daily Mass schedule will remain the same (8:30 am Tuesday & Wednesday at Holy Trinity, 8:30 am Thursday & Friday at Holy Spirit, 8:30 am First Saturday Mass alternating between the two parishes). Meanwhile, the Sunday Mass schedule will be as follows:

Saturday: 4:00 pm (Holy Spirit), 7:00 pm (Holy Trinity)

Sunday: 8:00 am (Holy Trinity), 10:00 am (Holy Trinity), 11:30 am (Holy Spirit), 5:00 pm (Holy Spirit)

The reason for the **temporary** addition of two additional Masses is to do the best that we can to accommodate as many attendees as possible given the likely reduced capacity that we will be working with at both churches (approximately 30% or 100 people total). I ask for your flexibility and patience with this process as quite a few practices will be outside of our usual normal routine.

Mass attendees will be asked to please follow the accompanying guidelines to the best of their ability to ensure that we can be in compliance with the Center for Disease Control and Diocesan guidelines:

-Please always bear in mind that social distancing regulations (keeping six feet apart from each other) and mask wearing is required (for the time being) for anyone over the age of two. Social distancing exceptions are for those assisting the mobility impaired and for households that attend Mass together. Therefore, please kindly keep six feet from each other while entering and exiting the church. Pews will be roped off in order for us to do our best to keep distancing in place. Thank you for your flexibility in sitting in a pew that may not be one that you normally sit in. On a related note, if you have any flexibility in attending either the Sunday 8 am Mass, or one of the temporary Masses (Saturday 7:00 pm at Holy Trinity or Sunday, 5:00 pm at Holy Spirit), that would be greatly appreciated in order to help us keep to 30% capacity or less for each Mass.

-If you arrive for a Mass and we have reached the maximum capacity for that liturgy (there will be signs posted at the doors if we have), you have the option of returning in approximately 40 minutes for Holy Communion or you may attend another Mass.

-Contact tracing: We ask for you to please bring your contact information (names of all attending Mass from your household, phone number, and address) and place it in the collection basket during the offertory. The reason is because parishes are required to collect information in the event that there is a confirmed case of COVID-19 that can be linked back to a Mass so we can communicate this to all in attendance as soon as possible. Thank you for your help with this.

-Please note that there will not be Missals or Holy Water for the time being. This is simply to avoid attendees from potentially contracting or spreading the virus.

-As we advised during the weekend of March 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup>, the sign of peace will not be offered. Likewise, we ask for you to prayerfully consider receiving the host in the hand instead of on the tongue. The reason is simply out of consideration for the health of the minister of Holy Communion (the priest or one designated lay person per Mass) as well as for those receiving communion after you.

-When you come forward to receive Holy Communion, please keep six feet of distance between you and the next person in line (unless they are part of your household).

-After Mass, please note that there will need to be a concerted effort for parishioners to kindly allow for distancing in leaving the church so that groups of people are not crowded all together. Please follow the directions from ushers to leave in a way that maintains social distancing. Unfortunately, I will not be able to shake hands after Mass. However, weather-permitting, I can stand outside (with a mask on) and greet from a distance.

#### During the Week:

-For the time being, we will need to do the best that we can in order to keep the occupancy load down as much as possible in the office for the safety of the parishioners and our office staff. Therefore, if you would like a Mass card or need to request information that can be done over the phone, we ask you to please call your respective parish office (Holy Trinity – 518 762 2636, Holy Spirit – 518 725 3143) to make arrangements. Business hours can be found on the front of the bulletin.

-Fr. Matt can make visits to parishioners' homes for the anointing of the sick and for Holy Communion provided that there has not been any direct contact with anyone with a confirmed case of COVID within a two week period of time by anyone in the home. You can make arrangements for this by calling his landline number (518 762 2011, extension 2) or via email at [Matthew.Wetsel@rcda.org](mailto:Matthew.Wetsel@rcda.org). On a related note, routine pastoral calls to the sick by our volunteers, especially our senior volunteers, will need to be very gradually reintroduced as to not put their health in unnecessary jeopardy. Phone calls and/or FaceTime calls will likely be a safe alternative for now until the infection rate allows for our ministers do this safely.

-Private, unannounced funeral Masses and baptisms may be scheduled as of May 31<sup>st</sup> provided that the families understand that there are to be no more than ten people present at the church (including the priest and music minister). The occupancy number restriction will hopefully change in the days and weeks to come, but for now, we are limited to a total of ten people in the church at once. Unfortunately, normally announced Daily Masses will need to wait until public Masse are allowed at a date to be announced.

#### The Sacrament of Reconciliation:

-The sacrament of reconciliation is currently available by appointment by contacting Fr. Matt. When public Masses are available again, Fr. Matt will temporarily extend the Saturday confession time window to 2:15 pm – 3:45 pm in order to allow penitents to be properly spaced throughout the church. Confessions will also still be available by appointment and after the 8:30 am First Saturday Mass.

#### The Adoration Chapel:

-Please note that the chapel is only able to accommodate a maximum of three people at a time due to temporary occupancy restrictions. Thank you for continuing to practice social distancing, using hand sanitizer, and cleaning your prayer space in the chapel.

#### Additional Notes:

-Please bear in mind that the obligation to attend Sunday Mass will still be lifted for the time being, even when public Masses become available again. The reason is to help at risk parishioners (over 60 years of age, pre-existing conditions, etc) make informed choices about when to return to Mass instead of feeling forced to go and being unnecessarily exposed to the virus.

-If you are caring for someone who is sick, you are not obligated to attend Sunday Mass. You can check the EWTN listings for TV Masses as a temporary alternative. I am hoping to be able to offer archived Masses on the weekends for on demand viewing on YouTube and Facebook, but that availability may be limited due to the increased responsibilities that I will have (I am currently the only community member who is editing and uploading Masses to the online platforms).

-Parish Bulletins will be available again starting the weekend of June 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> in the front vestibule of Holy Spirit Church in Gloversville (the door is always unlocked) as well as by the adoration side door. They will also be available at the entrance tables for Holy Trinity at the Glebe Street entrance (when the door is fixed) as well as the Clinton Street entrance, too. Holy Trinity Church is open from 10 am – 4 pm daily for individual prayer.

Thank you for your continued patience and flexibility. May the Lord be with you and protect you!

Peace,

Fr. Matt