

## *A Message from Father Brian ~*

This past week, a parishioner was standing in the main office (at a proper social distance!), and remarking that she *likes* change. She realizes that many of us don't (I myself am not a big fan!), but for her, change is usually energizing and refreshing—even just rearranging the furniture makes for a welcome change of scenery!

I've remarked many times over the past four months that it *astounds me* how much change we are all being forced to deal with—at home, in the workplace, among family members and friends, in the company of strangers, at the supermarket (or any store or business for that matter), at the doctor's office, when traveling or using public transportation, in planning meals and vacations and visits to elderly loved ones . . . the repercussions of the COVID-19 crisis seem to touch every imaginable aspect of life. And that has been very hard for many people. Especially when we're hearing news every day about alarming increases in the number of viral infections and hospitalizations in much of the country, one can't help wondering what new challenges (and changes) may be just around the corner.

Given the almost daily adjustments we've been asked to navigate—and will continue to be—I thought it a good opportunity to express my gratitude for the graciousness and patience with which so many of our parishioners have dealt with the changes affecting our church-life. Nothing has been the same since Bishop Barres decided in mid-March that Mass should no longer be celebrated publicly, and while parishes are now open again and certain aspects of parish life have returned, things continue to look and feel very different. That may be unsettling and even disappointing, but I'm deeply impressed (and grateful) for the cooperation that's being shown and the patience I've seen as we re-open more and more of our spiritual and worship life.

In that spirit of gratitude, allow me to make a few requests:

1. For those parishioners who have joined us for Mass, on weekends or weekdays or both, please

continue to follow the seating plan we laid out after careful thought and lots of measuring. You're all aware that church attendance is limited to only a portion of the building's total capacity (33% as of this past Wednesday), but the number of seats we can make use of is still about the same. Maintaining the familiar 6 feet of distance between individuals, couples, or families radically cuts down the number of people who can be seated, and we need to abide by that protocol. Fortunately, the number of folks coming to Mass in-person hasn't exceeded the seats we have (actually we haven't come close yet), so there's plenty of room for everyone choosing to join us. But please do sit where the signs indicate—whether at the end of a pew or in the center.

2. The distribution of Holy Communion has gone very well. People are following the taped lines on the floor so as not to get too close, and what seemed like a very strange routine a month ago is becoming at least *a little* more comfortable (I hope). Please maintain a single-file line in the center aisle. For all receiving in the hand (as the Bishop has asked *everyone* to do for the time being), please extend your hands "flat" . . . cupping them only increases the chances of having physical contact, which we're obviously trying to avoid. Those receiving on the tongue should come only to the priest celebrant, and should wait for the end of the line.

3. By all means bring your own small container of hand sanitizer, and be sure to wash your hands before coming to church and as soon as possible afterward. Our maintenance staff have been diligent in cleaning and sanitizing the church in the early morning each day, and between the Sunday liturgies.

4. Many people have becoming tired of their masks, but I think it's something we'll have with us *for a long time*. Masks or facial coverings **MUST** be worn by everyone entering the church, and kept in place *for the whole liturgy*. When it comes to receiving Holy Communion, it is recommended that you lower your mask *first*, then receive, and then replace your mask.

5. Most parish activities are not likely to resume for some time (especially with it being summer).

Though various groups and organizations are understandably eager to come together again, it doesn't make sense to do so for anything that's less than essential when so much is still uncertain. I would rather be overly cautious than risk anyone's health unnecessarily. We'll get there—step by step.

7. Back in March, when public celebrations of the Mass came to a halt, I thought that spelled dire news for our parish's financial health. There was no collection basket to pass, and no steady weekly income to be had (or so I believed). But the spirit of committed Stewardship has definitely taken root in our community, because any loss we've seen has been nowhere as precipitous as one might have feared, and the parish has been buoyed by week after week of steady, conscientious, and generous giving. At times we're receiving more by way of the mail and Faith Direct than we would have on an average spring or summer weekend a year ago—that's *simply remarkable!* But sustaining that momentum will take real resolve, and a dedicated commitment from the whole parish, especially as we move through the summer.

8. If you have any questions at all about what's happening, what's permitted, what time-changes are in place, etc. please don't hesitate to call. Keep checking the parish website for updates, and if you're not receiving the weekly email I've been sending, please give us your email address so you won't miss any important news or developments.

May our patron and brother, St. Lawrence, pray for us. God love you!