

May 18, 2021

First of all, I would like to acknowledge the challenges that all of us have faced in the midst of this Covid pandemic. I imagine that there is still some anxiety and there are still some challenges that we have to face but I am encouraged by those who continue to respect the needs of others, who do not just do what is good for themselves but care for what is happening to someone else. I also appreciate your willingness to except the norms that we have had in place during this during this pandemic and I do appreciate the cooperation that I received from so many of volunteers who helped us.

I was thinking about the relief that I experienced several weeks ago when I was able to schedule my first Covid vaccination. After I received that second shot - just the relief that I had all the protection from COVID that was available. As many of you know I fall into that vulnerable category since I have heart disease. One of the joys I have as a pastor is to have a full church. It's been sad for me to go over these many, many months, first with no one in the church and then just having limited numbers in attendance. Well, the Diocese sent out a communication to the priests indicating that we are to resume our normal mass schedule starting next weekend.

So we will be back to our normal schedule: 4 pm confessions on Saturday, 5 pm mass in English on Saturday, 10 am mass on Sunday in English and noon mass in Spanish. You will no longer be receiving calls from the office inviting you to come to mass. We will no longer require social distancing or face coverings.

I'm certainly very happy to see these changes since it will allow a lot more people to attend mass. But let's be careful about this. Anyone who is vulnerable or not vaccinated is encouraged to continue wearing a face covering and to follow social distancing norms. I expect everyone to treat them with respect.

Mass attendance is not required if:

You are ill or your health would be significantly compromised if you were to contract a communicable illness (i.e., you have underlying conditions or are in a high-risk category).

You exhibit flu-like symptoms.

You have good reason to think you might be asymptomatic of a contagious illness (such as being in recent contact with someone who tested positive for a contagious illness such as COVID-19 or influenza).

You care for the sick, homebound or infirm.

You are pregnant, or caring for small children.

You are 65 years of age or older (per the CDC's recommendation of high-risk individuals).

You cannot attend Mass through no fault of your own (such as no Mass is offered, you are infirm, or you are prevented for some reason you cannot control).

Someone already asked me how long this is going to last. I have no idea. I really don't. But the Diocese has told us that they continue to monitor the incidences of the coronavirus in North Carolina and the effectiveness of our safety protocols. We will make any adjustments necessary in order to preserve the health and wellness of everyone in our community. We will gradually re-integrate music and other things into the celebration, so please give us some patience. For now, we will not be distributing the Blood of Christ and we will not be extending the Sign of Peace.

Please contact me or the church office if you have any questions (828-670-0051). I am looking forward to seeing you back at mass.

- Fr. Dean

