



June 30, 2021

Dear friends,

Happy summer! I hope this finds you doing well as we cool off from a record-breakingly warm weekend and prepare for the 4th of July. We have much to celebrate, especially as Washington state begins to reopen today and we return to a semblance of normalcy after a year of extraordinary changes & sacrifices.

What this means for us

Let's jump straight to the lede: **face masks are now optional!** The state and the archdiocese still recommends that those who are not vaccinated wear face masks. Nonetheless, all are free to choose if and when they might wear face masks. On a similar note, **vaccination status will not be checked** at Masses. Please discern according to your medical status and needs – and let us be sure to give each other the benefit of the doubt about their decisions. Vaccinated or not, there are a great many people who have special needs and concerns. May we make sure that we honor them.

In order to accommodate anyone who might desire it, **we will be reserving a quarter of the church for physically distanced seating.** This will be the section of the church closest to the choir or the Saint Joseph side, if you are facing the altar. If you do not need to be physically distanced, please sit in another part of the church to allow those who need that space to have it available to them. This will be especially helpful in easing the concerns of those who are only just coming back to Mass.

The other big change is **the return of communion on the tongue.** The archbishop has ended his request that we receive on the hand. All are invited to receive as they would normally prefer.

The archdiocese has released a fuller list of current and future changes in their recent 'C2P' (Chancery to parish) mailing. You can read the entire document online and subscribe to receive future updates using the footnote below.¹

A moment for reflection

Though this is only the beginning of the end of the pandemic, I want to take a moment to offer my gratitude for your great patience and adaptation to all that has gone before. The sacrifices demanded of us have been many and often quite heavy – shutdowns, small and intermittent re-openings, and the many limitations we have had

¹ June 29, 2021 COVID-19 guidance, Archdiocese of Seattle (<https://mailchi.mp/seattlearch.org/prayer-card-about-virus-from-archbishop-1992359?e=0b72984380>)



to observe in our practices, **this has been a lot!** And yet, the overwhelming response from our community has been that of generosity and graciousness. So many of you have reached out to the staff, our school, and me to offer kind words, support, and statements of solidarity. We would never wish for the events of the last year, but they have borne great fruit in our community.

A special thanks

We should take a moment to acknowledge how, for the last year, we have relied heavily on a very limited number of volunteers. If you've been at Mass, you've undoubtedly seen them! They are the people who greet you at the door, who set up the church, who read & cantor, and who clean up after everyone has gone home. Would you believe that that group numbers less than 40 people? For almost twelve months, these folks have offered their time – some at every weekend or even at every Mass! **Please take time over the coming weeks to thank our volunteers at Mass.**

Our parish & school staff also merit particular thanks. They have worked tirelessly throughout this time, adapting to the requirements of remote and modified on-campus work. They have also made sure to be present to the needs of parents, students, and parishioners. We are blessed to have such dedicated ministers – let's be sure to let them know of our gratitude.

Where do we go from here?

Over the next several weeks, we will be looking at what new opportunities this re-opening allows for us. **One of the greatest concerns is homebound ministry,** particularly to those whom we have not been able to visit for so long. If you are interested in being an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion to the homebound, please contact Veronica (veronicao@saintmarkshoreline.org). We hope to have training and a formal commissioning ceremony later this summer. **If you have a loved one needing a visit, please contact me!** I am happy to bring them the sacraments – especially communion. You can set up a visit online (<https://saintmarkshoreline.org/fathermaurer/>) or call me at the parish office.

Please also consider how you are called to serve. In addition to homebound ministers – which we desperately need! – we also need new volunteers to be ushers, to lector, to sing in our choirs, to serve as sacristans, to help with flowers & decorations, to assist with cleaning of church linens & devotionals (candles & the like).

Additionally, I would love to see our community begin gathering fraternally outside of weekend and daily Masses. Are you interested in a young adult group, a couples' group, a book study group, a men's/women's group, a prayer group, a singles' group, or something else? Now is the time to start talking with like-minded individuals and



present your idea! I can't promise that every plan will work, but now is the time to consider how we would like to see the life of our parish restored and renewed.

As we look to the future, it seems to me that the sky is the limit. Even as we proceed with some caution, there is much to which we can look forward. One such thing will be our **end-of-summer parish picnic**, which we will hold in the field behind the school on Sunday, September 19th after the 10:30 am Mass. Our parish and school staff are still working out the details, but we hope everyone will come!

Wrapping up

Despite the great progress we have made, there is still much to be done. If you are able and have not done so already, please consider getting vaccinated. The Washington State Department of Health has a handy online locator (<https://vaccinelocator.doh.wa.gov/>). If you live in the area, I personally recommend UW Northwest (<https://www.uwmedicine.org/coronavirus/vaccine>) – I found their booking & process to be especially easy. Vaccinated or not, **let us maintain awareness of healthy practices and the needs of others.**

Let us also spread the invitation to all Catholics: **come to Mass!** We have proven that we can safely gather together and we know how precious & necessary the sacraments are for us. Although **the Sunday obligation remains dispensed**, we need Jesus – we need Him in the Eucharist! Despite all of our technological advances and upgrades, there is no substitute to coming to church and receiving our Lord.

Thank you for your faithfulness to the Lord and your commitment to our community. How good it is to be at this point with you all – and what a joy to look ahead to even greater blessings as we continue forward.

Yours in Christ,

Father Jacob Maurer