

The Paulist Center

Memorandum

To: the Paulist Center Community, Boston
From: Michael McGarry, C.S.P.
Date: December 2020
Re: Some of the Factors influencing our Decision

I put down some of the thoughts for Christmas and the Paulist Center Community as follows:

Christmas and the Paulist Center Community: the Staff, Pastoral Council, and the Worship Team have been talking about the very challenging issue of Liturgy and Christmas at the Paulist Center Community. Some of our challenges:

- **Limited capacity** (currently less than 70/service, including the balcony, which we have not had to use);
- **No singing** by congregation (Christmas without singing?);
- Maximum number of musicians (piano, flute, cello); HOWEVER, some of wonderful musicians are uncomfortable coming if the chapel would be admitting a large number of people, even if allowed by Commonwealth and Archdiocesan controls;
- **How to allocate admission to regular Paulist Center members;** of course, we would still have to require preregistration, but what to do with the family of four who comes and says, "My son/grandson just came in from NYC and I didn't want to leave him behind. It means so much to me that he is coming to church at all. Even though I didn't include him in our count, can't we just squeeze him in?" How do you say "no" to that?;
- What to do with **"walk-ins"**: people downtown looking for a place to go to Mass/Church with no connection to the Paulist Center Community just walking in (we have had a number of these each weekend, but always under the capacity controls); How do you say, when we've reached capacity, "There is no room for you here"?
- We anticipate that whatever form is chosen will **exclude people** whose **resentment** might be very high;
- Many of our current hospitality ministers and other volunteers say either they will be away for Christmas or they are unwilling to come in if there are a lot of people in the Chapel.

The effort to mitigate a few of these challenges may still cause more ill will than satisfaction.

Therefore we have decided to go “all virtual” this Christmas.

Why? In addition to the hurdles above, we note

- We are aware that many on the Pastoral Council have cautioned about opening at all; with the spike in new cases of Covid, perhaps we should maintain that caution;
- April’s Holy Week was all virtual and we received universally positive response to the quality, tone, and content of the liturgies;
- Going all virtual will allow us to put together some prerecorded (musical) parts of the liturgy;
- Going all virtual will respect the legitimate concerns of our current musicians and volunteers who wish not to return to the Chapel under the conditions which Christmas would bring;