

SURVEY ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Thank you so much for your great response to our survey regarding the resuming of Masses at Holy Faith. Due to the large number of questions, we are grouping our responses so we can provide a quick and conscientious response to your concerns. We hope this is helpful and encourages you to continue sending your questions, especially if you feel your concern has not been addressed.

General Issues: In this difficult, most unusual time in our history, we find different opinions and points of view that surface at all times. We have received comments from: “*you are opening too soon – not coming to Church until a vaccine is available*” –to- “*you are making too much of this pandemic, it is just like the flu and we should just move forward*”, and many other comments in between. Although Holy Faith appreciates and values your comments and diverse points of view, as a Christian and Catholic Church we are obligated to abide by the Gospel and by our mission of mercy and compassion. The wellbeing and life of each of our brothers and sisters is at the very core of who we are called to be Church, the Body of Christ. We also are called to honor God’s creation as a gift given to us to cherish and protect, and, God gave human beings the skills and resources needed to accomplish this. Science is one of those resources that we follow when moments like these appear in our midst. Our Bishop, following these same principles of faith and science is guiding us through this very unusual process, unprecedented in our Church.

We understand that these changes and adjustments can be inconvenient to a number of people and will certainly be in conflict with some people’s perspectives on the best practices to follow. However, we have to follow what we are asked to do in faith and mercy and in compliance with science. The Church is not above the law or above the facts, but the Church is all about making the necessary sacrifices to love one another, protect one another, and care for one another.

Let’s keep this in mind as we deal with these unusual times of inconvenience and adjustments for the sake of protecting life!

Question #1: Several people expressed their concern that they were not allowed to come to Mass because they were 65 years old or older.

For clarification, none of our communications have said that people who are 65 years old or older cannot come to Mass. What the directives say is that people who are 65 or older are considered to be in a vulnerable population and are encouraged to stay home for their safety and the safety of others. However, it also says that if anyone who is 65 or over wishes to attend Mass we will certainly respect that decision. Please read carefully the communication sent. It is up to the individual senior person to decide if attending Mass is the right thing for them or not.

Question #2: Who should NOT come to Mass?

Those of any age who are sick in any way, certainly if you are coughing or have a fever, and those who have any kind of illness that makes them more susceptible or have a compromised immune system (e.g. lung disease, cancer, diabetes, asthma, other autoimmune diseases...)

Question #3: Traveling out of Gainesville: what if I live in Williston, Micanopy, or near Gainesville; what if I work out of Gainesville and commute every day?

Yes, you can come to Mass if you live in Williston or Micanopy. The Bishop’s directive state that if anyone has traveled out of the area, they must wait 14 days before coming to Church. In our case we are referring to the “Gainesville area” which includes the places near Gainesville like Williston and Micanopy, and others.

The 14 days apply only if you travel out of the Gainesville area to another region in Florida or to another state, and certainly out of the country. If your work requires you to commute, we will contact you to get more information and will certainly do everything we can to accommodate your needs.

Question #4: If you are an essential worker, can you attend Mass?

Yes! As long as you are not compromised in any other form and are healthy.

Question #5: How are we going to receive communion?

Everyone will be receiving some specific directions on how to proceed when you come to Mass. We are trying to accomplish different sets of values: we have to follow the safe distancing and all other sanitation and behavior procedures, at the same time we have to protect the best we can the integrity and dignity of the Sacred Liturgy.

Communion, as stated before, will only be distributed on the hand and each person will be guided to follow the distancing marks to maintain distancing during the communion line. People will pull their masks down to receive communion, and although gloves are not required, if you choose to wear gloves, they will need to be removed to receive communion. If anyone chooses not to receive communion or for any reason is not prepared to receive, they can approach the minister with their arms crossed on the chest and will get a blessing.

Question #6: I am used to going to a different Mass: 8am or 6pm. Will these Masses be resumed? It is more convenient for me to attend 8am or 6pm Masses.

At the moment we are only resuming 2 Masses on the weekend: Saturday, Vigil Mass & one Sunday morning Mass, 9:30am or 11:15am. The intention is to gradually open more Masses as we move forward. The reason for this is twofold: first, the protection of our priests, especially Fr. Emmanuel, second, the personnel and volunteers needed to manage the mechanics of required sanitation and social distancing. We need more people to respond to volunteer for our COVID LITURGICAL TEAM to be able to open more Masses, but, the more each person and family cooperates and adjusts to these changes, the less number of volunteers we will need.

That will allow us more flexibility for adding Masses. Also, we may need to wait until our third new priest arrives on July 1. Fr. Emmanuel is evaluating this situation very carefully. This situation is unique at Holy Faith and it may be different in other parishes in town. Unfortunately, individual Mass preference times is not high in the priorities at the moment. We keep hope it will be in the future.

Question #7: I am used to sitting in a specific pew or side in the Church. Will I be able to sit in the same place?

Depends on the place. Each pew has been marked to keep the appropriate distancing during the Mass and therefore the number of seats is considerably limited. People have to sit in a marked pew wherever the space is available. There will be an opportunity to choose between middle pews or side pews or the chapel. The handicap section will be marked the same way. It is very important for each person and family to sign up as soon as you receive the sign up sheet. We will be streaming the Mass in the Fr. John M. Phillips Parish Life Center and there will also be accommodations there to follow the guidelines. Holy Communion will be brought there at the appropriate time during the Mass.

Question #8: How long will the Mass be?

As most people know, the length of time that people are together confined in one space can significantly affect and increase the possibility of contamination. We are preparing our Masses to be as short as possible and reasonable while preserving the dignity of the Sacrament and the integrity of the Liturgical Rite. Everyone should have the opportunity to pray the liturgy with reverence and to participate fully, consciously, and actively without compromising their health. That is the goal!