



ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST

Catholic Church & School

November 22, 2020

Dear Parishioners:

Amazing . . . even in the midst of a pandemic Advent just kind of sneaks up on us! This coming week is the last week of the Church Year, and next Sunday is the First Sunday of Advent! Of course, Christmas isn't too far behind.

I suspect that the warnings we've been seeing and hearing about how to celebrate – and, just as importantly, NOT celebrate – Thanksgiving next Thursday will only grow in frequency and intensity as our focus shifts toward Christmas, especially if there is a measurable spike in the number of infections in the first two weeks of December. Many family traditions may need to be drastically modified if not totally shelved out of an abundance of caution: gathering for a family meal, visiting grandparents, holding open houses, caroling. . . it's probably going to be a rather subdued holiday.

With this in mind, I want to address the topic of Christmas Masses. I've heard some of my colleagues speculate that many Catholics who would ordinarily attend Mass on Christmas will tend to stay away this year because of COVID. While those whose age, pre-existing conditions or compromised auto-immune system make them especially vulnerable to the virus probably should opt to stay at home, I'm not so sure that many of you will take that course. So, at both STA and SJB we are having four Masses for your convenience: two on Christmas Eve and two on Christmas Day. At STA, the Christmas Eve Masses will be at 4:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m.; the Christmas Day Masses will be like Sunday: 8:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. At SJB, the Christmas Eve Masses will be at 3:00 p.m. and 5:00 p.m., while Christmas Day Masses will be as on Sunday, at 7:30 a.m. and 9:30 a.m.

At both Churches, social distancing will be observed. This means that unlike in years past, we cannot allow people to stand in the back of Church or in the doorways; once it appears that we have seated the number of people we can accommodate without compromising social distancing we will have to close the doors. **THIS IS LIKELY TO BE AN ISSUE AT BOTH CHURCHES FOR THE EARLY MASS ON CHRISTMAS EVE.** (At SJB, where pre-registration for Masses is required, the 3:00 p.m. Mass was nearly filled within twenty-four hours. STA does not pre-register people for its Masses, but I'm pretty sure that, if it did, it would yield a similar result.)

So, here's my thought: since this year's Christmas routine is probably going to be anything but routine, please consider coming to Mass on Christmas Day, especially if that hasn't been your practice in recent years. I know that for myself, as celebrant, Christmas Day Mass is qualitatively different from Christmas Eve Mass – not necessarily better or worse, just different. Perhaps it would strike you in a similar way.

Oh, in both Churches at any of the Masses, the proper wearing of face masks is expected.

Father Phil