

Dear Parishioners,

I wanted to share with you the good news that as a result of the lifting of many COVID restrictions by the State of Connecticut effective May 19, Bishop Caggiano has lifted the restrictions on the number of people attending Mass. ***Starting with the Pentecost Vigil Mass on May 22, we will allow full attendance at all Masses. Additionally, the current exemption of the obligation to attend weekly Mass will expire on May 22***, so anyone who is able to attend Mass is obligated to do so starting Pentecost weekend.

While the new guidance gives us greater freedom, there still are some necessary precautions Sacred Heart and St. Patrick will maintain to ensure we remain safe, including:

- ✝ Masks must be worn by all Mass attendees INDOORS only
- ✝ The Church will continue to be sanitized after each Mass

Additionally, at communion, social distance spacing will not be required and we will resume double lines in the center aisle. Parishioners will be asked to lower their masks as they approach the priest for communion, receive and consume the Body of Christ and then replace their mask over your nose and mouth without stepping aside.

Also, since we don't have restrictions on the number of attendees, **we will discontinue the Mass reservation system**. However, *we will continue the volunteer sign-up system at Sacred Heart since it has been a useful means of managing our Reader and Eucharistic Ministers for each Mass. St. Patrick's will continue to use the sign-up sheets in the gathering Space for Readers and Eucharistic Ministers.*

We will resume regular offertory collections in church, with ushers using the long-handled collection baskets.

In announcing the upcoming changes, Bishop Caggiano used the theme, "It's time to come home." I think this perfectly expresses the joy many of us who have been separated from loved ones feel when we are finally able to come together. We've missed being together to share our joy and our sorrows. The same is true with our parish family. We've missed seeing and being with one another in person. What a joy it will be to see many of you again who have been unable to be with us this past year!

**I'm brushing off the welcome mats at both of our beautiful churches and
I can't wait to see your smiling faces!**

We will continue to livestream and record the Vigil Mass for our friends and family that cannot attend Mass for health reasons or COVID concerns.

Yours in Christ,
Fr. Joe