



SAINT JOHN FISHER PARISH

January 15, 2021

Dear Parishioners:

I think we are all happy to be in a new year and hope to find things much better than they were last year. Covid-19 transformed things in way that we could never have imagined last January. I am looking forward to getting that vaccination in my arm. When that will be, I do not know as of this writing.

Due to a court decision, churches could reopen provided they follow the safety protocols consistent with other places. Since last July we had been offering all Masses and confessions outdoors. The question I was constantly asked was: when do we go back inside church? It is not an easy answer. Just because we can does not necessarily mean we should. As your pastor, I must balance people's spiritual needs with safety concerns. I certainly do not want to risk your health. Last June when the church was reopened after being closed for two months, we put in place several protocols to provide a safe environment for worshippers. I sent you a special letter giving all the details necessary for reopening. Staff and volunteers underwent special Covid-19 training. We coned off the pews to enable social distancing. The inside of the church was regularly sterilized. People were checked at the doors to be sure their mouths and noses were covered. Hand sanitizers were provided for all coming to church, and all giving out communion used them immediately ahead of time. These same procedures were followed when last July the state mandated that Mass was to be celebrated outdoors.

The week after Christmas, occasioned by a windy rainstorm, I moved the 5:15 pm Mass into the church. It worked out so well, that I thought that the congregants were sufficiently safe inside. So, at the 8:00 am daily Mass, viewed by people on livestream, I opened the doors to those who were watching from the parking lot. We have continued to offer Communion after Mass to those who wish to come. Social distancing has been maintained. I need to respect those who still do not feel comfortable coming to church while at the same time offering a safe opportunity to worship to those who do wish to come. Each person needs to make his or her own decision over how much risk is acceptable. We will do our part to minimize the risks but cannot eliminate them completely.

After consultation with the pastoral council and pastoral staff, I decided to delay opening the church for weekend Masses. Things may change later according to the spread of the pandemic and the distribution of the vaccine. Any changes will be posted on the parish website as soon as they occur.

These are not easy decisions. I have made them after seeking the advice and recommendations of many in the parish and outside and with much prayer. Please continue to pray for me as I strive to do my best to serve you.

Yours in Christ,

Rev. Msgr. David A. Sork
Pastor