

October 1, 2020

Dear Parishioners,

I have been thinking about the entrances to our beautiful church of St. Andrew during this time that we continue to follow our safety protocols in order to minimize the spread of the COVID-19 virus and I would like to share some of my observations with you. I have been observing how our rituals have changed – how we come and go, how we enter and leave. First of all, let me say that our attendance at Sunday Mass has been rather consistent these last couple of months, and is about one-third of "pre-COVID" attendance. October is the month when we take the official "October Count" of attendance, which I am sure will confirm this. I mention this because I know that many who are reading this have not returned to Mass as yet, and that is probably a wise decision. But I realize that many of you have not been present at church to observe with your own eyes how different things are from "normal," so I hope my description is helpful and my observations are meaningful.

I was noticing how everyone – men, women and children – goes straight to the hand sanitizer dispenser on entering the church. Bravo! That is exactly what we all should do. A few people still reach for the Holy Water font, but most don't bother because they know they are dry and empty so as not to spread the virus. I began to think that maybe I should bless the hand sanitizer, inasmuch as the ritual of using it before entering the church has replaced the ritual of blessing ourselves with holy water as a reminder of our Baptism when we made our original "entrance" into the Church.

I have also been observing and reflecting upon our open doors. **Since the church reopened after the shutdown, we have the doors standing wide open before, during, and after Mass. This is so no one has to touch a door handle to enter the church. But the open doors have great symbolic value also. They say "Welcome! Come in!"** They remind us that Christ has opened the gates of heaven for us, which had been closed and barred after the sin of our first parents. It is good to see those open doors, especially when I think back to the time earlier this year when the church was closed and locked for almost three months. With the weather turning colder, there may be some who think we should close the doors, but they will stay open so that the fresh air will help to disperse the virus. So, dress warmly when you come to church this Fall and Winter.

Whether you are coming through the doors of our church or are still waiting until it is safer to do so, I hope this little reflection helps you appreciate our "entrance" into the Church!

Your Pastor,
Msgr. Stephan Moloney