



November 12, 2020

Dear Parishioners,

The beginning of Advent is still two weeks away, but I want to share with you some plans we are making for the celebration of Christmas here at St. Andrew Parish.

First of all, thank you to all who participated in our survey regarding your intentions for attending Mass for the feast of Christmas. Your responses have been helpful in making our plans. We received a little less than 300 responses and that is a very good return for which I am grateful. Unless there is a new shutdown or stay-at-home order issued (which is possible, given the worrisome increase in COVID 19 cases) it is our intention to have the full Christmas Eve/Christmas Day Mass schedule as follows: 4 p.m., 6 p.m. and 10 p.m. on Christmas Eve, and 9 a.m. and 11 a.m. on Christmas Day. A second Mass to take place in the school gym will be planned for 4 p.m. Christmas Eve. It is possible, but not likely, that other masses may be scheduled in the gym if there is a reason to do so. **Most importantly, "in-person" attendance at all Masses scheduled on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day will be by reservation only.** Under the current safety protocols and social distancing requirements, there will be at most 300 people permitted to attend Mass in the church, and at most 250 permitted in the gym. This depends on our ability to seat larger family groups (6 to 10 people living in the same household) together in one pew. In the coming weeks, we will be announcing the procedure for making reservations and obtaining the necessary entrance ticket that will be needed for every participant to enter the church (or gym) and be seated. There will be a deadline for making reservations, and they will be available on a "first-come, first-served" basis. Right now, we are planning to open the "box office" on Tuesday, Dec. 1.

We are also planning to livestream all of our Christmas Masses and services throughout the Octave of Christmas. I really want to encourage everyone to consider this option, especially given the increasing threat of COVID-19 illness. To encourage and enhance meaningful participation via live stream, a special worship aid booklet is being prepared, which will cover all the Masses of Christmas and the Octave, including the Feast of the Holy Family, and the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God. We plan to make it available electronically on our website, as well as printed "hard copies" for use in church or at home. Individuals who receive a copy of the booklet when they attend Mass in person would be expected to keep the booklet and use it throughout the octave.

Christmas is a time when our traditions are very important. Many of us hold the keeping of Christmas traditions very dear and precious. One of those cherished traditions is coming to church for Mass together as a family on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day. This year, the year of Our Lord 2020, is different. There is something more important than keeping our traditions – namely, keeping safe and staying healthy. The Coronavirus pandemic has wreaked havoc on so much – our jobs, our economy, our

schooling, our travel and vacation plans, our social interactions, and our family gatherings. It should be no surprise that our Christmas traditions will also be spoiled. For this reason, I want to urge all of you to set aside your expectations of keeping your Christmas traditions, as usual, this year, especially the tradition of attending Christmas Mass in person. We will not be keeping our usual traditions in the manner in which our Christmas Masses will be celebrated at St. Andrew's. There will be no pageantry or solemn ceremony. Instead, there will be simplicity and social distancing. **So, I strongly suggest that we set aside our traditions – just for this year – and do things differently.** Please put your safety and that of your family first. Consider the possibility of partaking in Christmas Mass from the safety of your home via livestream. Or, alternatively, consider celebrating Christmas in person at Mass on one of the other days within the Octave of Christmas, such as on the Feast of the Holy Family (December 27) or the Solemnity of Mary (January 1). Whatever you decide and however you choose to celebrate Christmas this year, please choose carefully, based on the criteria of safety rather than sentimentality. I do remind you that all Catholics are dispensed from the obligation of attending Mass this Christmas, for good reason. Please do not hesitate to take advantage of this dispensation.

Please stay tuned for more information about our plans for celebrating Christmas at St. Andrew in the days and weeks ahead.

Your Pastor,
Msgr. Stephan Moloney