

## **Transitions to Normalizing our Parish Experience**

Tuesday, May 25<sup>th</sup>, the Green Bay Diocese held a webinar for parish staffs, introducing updated guidelines for parishes to make local decisions to continue welcoming people back to Mass and stepping out with boldness as we loosen precautions. These updates reflect the data we are seeing regarding COVID-19, updated guidance from the CDC, and a continued call to step out in bold faith to live and share the Gospel as a community. The diocese has reiterated that we are empowered to make local decisions while strongly considering the principles set forth in the diocesan guidance. **Please note, Catholic schools have their own set of guidelines.**

### **The language from the diocese regarding masks is this:**

*“Masks are welcome for anyone and strongly encouraged for those who need to take protective measures or for those who at this time are not vaccinated. In Christian charity, the rights of health, freedom, and conscience are to be respected by all. These guidelines are to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and will continue to be measured, monitored, and adjusted as needed.”*

### **Here are a couple of takeaways regarding masks:**

- As a parish we ought to appeal to individuals’ consciences to make prudent decisions in light of ongoing data. That data ought to be communicated and received.
- We respect each individual’s decision, and we ask that in Christian charity that each respects the decisions of others.

Please note, the diocese has never endorsed any kind of vaccine mandate, nor would our parish leadership. Neither does the Catholic Church consider taking the vaccine immoral (more details have been provided by various reputable sources). Minimizing or vilifying others based on vaccine status violates the spirit of Christian charity.

Having said all that, here are some tangible changes coming to Good Shepherd Parish:

### **The weekend of May 29-30, the following changes will be implemented:**

1. Choirs will be returning in limited fashion. A bulletin announcement previously covered this.
2. The holy water fonts will be refilled at the church entrances.

### **Starting the weekend of June 5-6, the following changes will be implemented:**

3. A number of Heritage Missals will be available at the entrance(s) of church to use for Mass and then return to shelf (Note, these copies must stay in church.). These should be enough for those who did not get a missal for their personal use. Others who do have a missal at home be sure to bring it because there will not be enough in church for everyone. If you wish, you may turn your personal copy in to be added to the collection of church copies.
4. The reception line for Holy Communion will have just a slight tweak: We are now asking that those in the side pews please file through the center long pews to join the center aisle line.
5. We will resume announcing the sign of peace at Mass, but please be mindful of others’ comfort level with close contact.
6. All the ropes will be removed from the pews except for one small section where masks and social distancing will be required.

**The dispensation from the Sunday Mass obligation is still in place and will remain until further catechesis can be offered regarding this obligation.**

Also, for now we do ask that Eucharistic ministers wear masks while they distribute Communion regardless of vaccination status, as well as ushers wear masks while they receive the collection with long-handled baskets.