



Saint Thomas the Apostle Parish

The CDC has raised the risk level for several counties in our diocese to 'high' in terms of community transmission of COVID-19. These counties are Ionia, Kent, Lake, Mason, and Ottawa. Additionally, the other counties of the diocese: Mecosta, Muskegon, Montcalm, Newaygo, Oceana, and Osceola are all classified as being at the 'substantial' level. **In either classification, the CDC strongly recommends that all individuals, regardless of vaccination status, wear a mask in public indoor settings.**

We seem a long distance from the restrictions in place last fall and extending into the spring. As much as I personally enjoy my ability to interact with you before and after Mass on the weekend, I am keeping a watchful eye on the spread of variants of the Covid-19 virus. The beginning of the school year approaches and gradually people will return from vacations and excursions to regular presence at Saint Thomas for the celebration of Mass. There is a need to make room for everyone. Beginning the weekend of August 28 - 29, we will return to opening all the doors to the Church and institute the following protocol for seating at Mass:

Saturday 5 pm Mass

- Seating in the Upper Church will return to normal with open seating in all parts of the Church. Masking is strongly recommended, but you are free to act as you judge best.
- Seating in the Lower Level of the Church will be available in a social distancing arrangement. We ask you to wear a mask out of consideration for those who have health concerns.

Sunday 7:30 am Mass

- Seating in the Upper Church will return to normal with open seating in all parts of the Church. Masking is strongly recommended, but you are free to act as you judge best.
- **Coffee and donuts** will be available in the Rectory Conference Room, a short walk through the tunnel between the Lower Level of the Church and the Rectory. (Beginning Sept. 12)

Sunday 9 am Mass

- Seating in the Upper Church will return to normal with open seating in all parts of the Church. Masking is strongly recommended, but you are free to act as you judge best.
- Seating in the Lower Level of the Church will be available in a social distancing arrangement. We ask you to wear a mask out of consideration for those who have health concerns. Those in the Lower level will be asked to exit the Lower Level by the doorways and stairwells to the right and left of the stage.
- **Coffee and donuts** will be available after Mass in the Lower Level of the Church.
- **Nursery** will be provided for children ages walker through 3 years old. (Beginning Sept. 12)
- **Children's Sunday School** (for those who have registered) will be held during Mass in the school. (Beginning Sept. 19)

Sunday 11 am Mass

- Seating in the Upper Church will return to normal with open seating in all parts of the Church. Masking is strongly recommended, but you are free to act as you judge best.
- There will be no seating in the Lower Level.
- **Coffee and donuts** will be available after Mass in the Lower Level of the Church.
- **Nursery** will be provided for children ages walker through 3 years old. (Beginning Sept. 12)

Sanitizing stations have been mounted permanently on the walls of the Church and Lower Level near the doors.

Sanitizing stations will continue to be in place for those approaching for Holy Communion who wish to use them.

The Parish is mindful that situations can change in regards to health and safety. The Parish staff will be following Diocesan updates, monitoring the positivity rate in the county, watching health department recommendations, and consulting with medical professionals in our community continuously as we keep the safety of all Mass attendees at the forefront of our minds.