



May 30th, 2020

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Our St. Matthew Community has been so patient as we have been waiting for a return to public Mass. I am very happy that we are getting close to that date for St. Matthew. The Archdiocese has given us guidelines for how we can come together again safely during the celebration of the Eucharist.

These guidelines tell us that we must complete a re-opening plan, and receive approval for that plan before coming together again for Mass. We are reminded that "it is vitally important that we are diligent in following the guidelines to reduce the risk of potentially spreading of the virus." We are indeed a close knit community, and it would be tragic if one of our members became ill because they joined us at Mass, and we did not have the recommended safety precautions in place.

We are in King County, which means we are currently in Phase 1 of the opening process. In Phase 1, we can have only 8 persons—including ministers and those persons necessary to the live stream—to attend the on-line services we offer. With an outdoor Mass, we can include 92 more attendees for a total of 100. We are exploring how we could accomplish an outdoor Mass, or even if it is feasible for us, and will update you on our progress. We will continue to live-stream our Sunday Mass at 10am for the foreseeable future.

At the same time, we have begun our planning for Masses in the church space that will ensure we are able to worship together safely. The guidelines we are following for Phase 2 means we are planning for 50 to attend a Mass.

Many things will be different. For example, we will include sign-ups for Mass attendance, wearing of masks during the liturgy, social distancing by household and between single attendees, possible a seniors' only Mass, no congregational singing, an offertory basket as you enter, and Communion after the final blessing. As much as I enjoy greeting you before and after Mass, my greeting will be while wearing a mask, and at a distance. Once details are finalized, we will provide a handout on the new, temporary, flow of the liturgy.

To help with our planning, we have attached a short survey, which we ask you to return as soon as possible. You can do so by email by scanning or taking a photo of the completed survey, by mailing it, or by putting it through our parish office door.

I want to personally say that I have seen that our church has continued in so many ways during this pause of receiving the Eucharist. You are not only financially supporting our parish and school, but also St. Vincent de Paul; you are making masks for us when we re-open: calling each other to make sure everyone is O.K. and praying for each other; and still finding ways to serve the poor and vulnerable in our wider community.

There is a phrase: "pregnant pause", which can be interpreted to mean we have paused for a time and that pause will be followed by something significant. During the days after the death of Jesus, his followers paused in the upper room. Then "suddenly there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind, and it filled the entire house in which they were. Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire, which parted and came to rest on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:2-4a). Let us all be filled with the Holy Spirit this day, and always. I continue to pray for all of you and ask your continued prayers for me, for our school staff as they end the year, and for our parish staff.

In Christ,

Fr. Khanh D. Nguyen
Pastor