



1376 Snell Isle Blvd NE
St. Petersburg, Florida 33704
Phone: (727)-821-7989
straphaels@st-raphaels.com

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Dear St. Raphael Parish Members,

I am delighted to let you know, if you haven't heard already, that Bishop Parkes has authorized parishes of the Diocese of St. Petersburg to resume the celebration of Sunday Mass. This is good news for all of us. He has asked each pastor to determine the best process and means for their parish to open, while following guidelines for social distancing and the pandemic. *Basically, this is phase II of returning to Mass for the Diocese of St. Petersburg.* With that in mind, I am pleased to announce that St. Raphael will resume Sunday Masses on the weekend of June 6 & 7 2020, The Most Holy Trinity. What an appropriate day!

Although Sunday Mass is resuming, the celebrations will not be that with which we are familiar. We must maintain restrictions related to the virus for the protection and wellbeing of our parish members, visitors, and ministers. Listed below are some key points about our return.

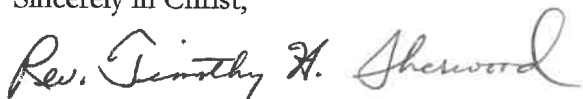
- We will celebrate the 4:30pm Saturday and 8:00am, 9:30am & 11:30am Sunday Mass. At this time, we will not resume the 5:30pm Mass (a decision made by Fr. Curtis after he arrives).
- Those attending Mass will enter through the main doors allowing us to better control the numbers and seating. Although we do not expect to exceed a 50% capacity, we may be forced to stop people from entering due to the number of people.
- Seating will remain limited, generally in every other pew. However, individuals or families should remain 6 feet from each other. Pews will be marked with signage as a gentle reminder.
- We encourage everyone to wear a mask during Mass (except to receive Communion) and to sanitize their hands before entering the nave (seating area) of the church.
- There will be no hymnals or other prayer books in the church; you are welcome to bring your own.
- The music, specifically at the 8am and 9:30am (Praise Band), will be somewhat reduced or limited in nature.
- There will not be a collection, but a basket will be available near the Baptism font for people to drop their offering before or after Mass.
- The gifts will not be presented by the assembly and we will not shake at the sign of peace.
- We will have five Ministers offering Communion but there will be no Precious Blood. Due to the significant health risks to the ministers and the assembly, Communion will only be offered in the hand.

- To reduce crowds or gatherings we ask that people maintain social distancing while exiting the nave. All exit doors will be available. People will not be permitted to gather in the Narthex or other areas inside the church.
- To assist our procedures during Mass, we are working toward having three designated ushers to help coordinate the entrance, seating, and exiting of the Church building.
- These ushers will also ensure that the entire nave and door hardware are sanitized between Masses with an appropriate industrial sanitizer.
- Confessions will return to 3:30pm on Saturday but will remain in the Cry Room.
- Baptism will be offered on Sundays, following the 11:30am Mass.
- A limited number of bulletins will be available on a table in the Narthex
- We have developed more detailed procedures for each of the ministries active during Mass.

Please remember, we are far from normal again. This opportunity is to allow people to return to the actual celebration of Mass and more importantly to receive Communion. **The Dispensation from Sunday obligation to attend Mass remains in effect until further notice. Those who are more susceptible to infection because of age or medical condition or those who are fearful of returning to public gatherings too soon should stay home.**

I ask for your patience and understanding (for our ministers and the process) as we move forward with this return. In hindsight I want to extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to all of you. Your understanding and continued financial support have been a blessing to us all. I want to thank Fr. Kevin, Deacon Jim and our ministry staff for their assistance and guidance during this time. This is not the way I wanted to say goodbye as I transfer to another parish, but these last two months have been a new experience for all of us. It is sad to say we are not out of the woods yet, but this is a slow start. Let us continue to pray for each other that the virus is in check and that people may return to employment and an active way of life soon.

Sincerely in Christ,



Rev. Timothy Sherwood,
Pastor