

Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

This past week, I received some really good questions around a few process changes, and I wanted to take an opportunity to offer some explanations as well as an invitation.

First, the invitation: please, if there is anything that you observe that is happening at St. Thomas, even if it something that upsets you, I want to invite you to contact me. Call and make an appointment for a visit or just pick up the phone and call me. I want to hear what you have to say, and I absolutely want an opportunity to share information with you if there is something that needs to be clarified. I will always be available.

Now the explanations: as you know, we have moved into Phase 3 and we are all trying to figure out what our most recent normal looks like. The first thing that I want to do is give a huge shout-out to your remarkable St. Thomas staff that have tirelessly brainstormed through each change that has happened over the past year—and there have been hundreds of them!

What you may not know is that we get direction from a couple of sources; the Governors guidance for what is allowed in each phase that you may be reading, is used, but also, that guidance is the basis for the recommendations from the Archdiocese that we use. The Archdiocese has been remarkable in working with the Governors office to advocate for our parishes to allow our liturgies and celebrations to be reinstated with modifications to stay in alignment with the Governor's mandates. That said, it has been a challenge for all of us at the parish level as well as at the Archdiocesan level. Each church is a different size and shape so the guidance that we receive is not a one-size-fits-all document. What our neighbors are able to do might not reflect what we are able to do. In order to assure that we are in compliance with the guidance provided, the Archdiocese has provided us with tools to submit a plan based on our individual circumstances. Each time there is a change (even the slightest change) we are pivoting, submitting a plan change, the Archdiocese is reviewing it based on our individual parish, and helping us problem-solve through challenges by giving us individualized feedback. We have tried to be as nimble as possible, but even in our best efforts, we recognize that these changes might not be seen as quickly as our parishioners would like and we also recognize that, despite our best brainstorming efforts, we might not have the perfect solution for things. So, please, if you have ideas and thoughts about how you think we might be able to do it better, let us know. I can not promise that they will fit inside the guidance that we have, but I can promise that we are open to hearing any ideas and appreciative for additional thoughts. All that to say, we are working into the Phase 3 guidance and trying to offer some solutions that will meet the needs of all comfort levels among our parishioners. This is not forever. We will adjust as the needs dictate. We also need to try to be aware of our limited space. We are working toward systems to move away from Mass signups which have been kept in place **only** to ensure that we do not turn anyone away at the door because of capacity limitations. Now that we have the ability for more capacity, if people are comfortable with closer seating, we should be able to eliminate Mass sign ups. Presently, we want to reserve some space for those people that would prefer to select seating that honors the 6' social distancing as we are encouraged to continue to do according to our guidance. We are taking steps. Again, the goal is that everyone that wants to come to Mass is able and feels welcome, safe and loved!

The second explanation is around Eucharistic Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. A concern was expressed to me over Eucharistic Adoration and so I took the opportunity to dig in and investigate information about our current permissions to have Eucharistic Adoration. As I began this investigation, I

was not comfortable that we had permission to celebrate Eucharistic Adoration in the manner that we were experiencing it, so I requested that we pause until I could learn more and make certain that we had the appropriate permissions in place. I now know exactly what our permission is, and we are working toward an expanded Eucharistic Adoration plan. Currently, we have permission to temporarily during Covid, have exposition of the Blessed Sacrament in the main church. To begin rebuilding the team of people that have this beautiful personal devotion, we are starting with Adoration on Tuesday evenings after Mass and will continue to expand those hours as we are able to provide Jesus with adorers. We would like to encourage everyone to consider this personal devotion to spend time in watchfulness and prayer with Jesus if you are able. If this is something you are called to, please contact the parish office so that we can add your name to the list of adorers. This will help us create adoration hours.

Again, please consider the invitation. If you have concerns or frustrations, please know that they will be heard. Likewise, do not hesitate to take a moment to share your appreciation to the staff for their efforts. I can promise you; those are appreciated more than words can express.

In Christ+

Lorrie Conway  
Pastoral Coordinator