



# Our Lady Star of the Sea Parish

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May 27, 2020

Dear Parishioners, Friends and Neighbors,

I write on behalf of myself, Deacon Joe Whipple, and the staff of Our Lady, Star of the Sea Parish. We want to say welcome back! We missed you! On Monday, May 18 we listened to Governor Charlie Baker announce that houses of worship could reopen in a slowly, guided process as part of phase 1 as we recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. On Tuesday, May 19 we took part in a webinar offered to parishes by the Archdiocese of Boston as they offered us guidance and regulations to be followed prior to the celebration of Mass resuming. On Wednesday, May 20 our parish staff gathered physically or virtually to begin the process in Marblehead. We have decided to see the process in 4 stages: Preparation, Implementation, Oversight and Reflection. The reopening of our beautiful church for Mass will begin with the 4:00 p.m. Mass on Saturday, May 30 (Pentecost weekend). This will be followed by Masses on Sunday, May 31 at 7:30 a.m., 9:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. We know how excited so many of our parishioners are to return to celebrate the Eucharist in community once again. It is truly a privilege to welcome you back to Our Lady's church. I see this as a real challenge to rebuild our parish. This has been a traumatic time in our history and it will take us time to recover. We have to be patient with ourselves and one another. Daily Masses will resume on Monday, June 1 at 9:00 a.m. and will be celebrated Monday through Friday. Some of our parishioners who may not feel comfortable returning for the weekend liturgies may feel more comfortable coming to a weekday Mass. Some may not feel comfortable coming to church now. We respect your decisions. We know that for some of our most faithful older parishioners, their families may discourage them from participating at this time.

Our parishioners will also be able to celebrate baptisms, weddings and funerals in the church beginning on May 30. We are still in discussion regarding First Communion (postponed from May 9) and Confirmation (scheduled for November 9). We have put our reopening information on our church doors, the rectory phone line, the weekly bulletin, and the parish webpage. We sent emails to all the parishioners on our email list and we are sending this letter to all our registered parishioners.

We are so grateful for your patience and understanding. It has been over 10 weeks since we have worshiped together as a faith community. We are so happy that many were able to drop by the church to "make a visit" during these weeks as we have the church open from 7:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. for private prayer. Our staff has been hard at work on Phase 1 (Preparation). Phase 2 (Implementation) will be initiated on May 30/31. Phase 3 (Oversight) will involve consideration of the experiences of our parishioners as we begin the process, and Phase 4 (Reflection) will take place as we meet weekly as a staff to review our experiences with the reopening process. I believe many parishes will not survive the pandemic financially. Your response during the past weeks during our closure has been wonderful. We have been overwhelmed by your generosity through We Share, offertory envelopes, and financial donations dropped off at the rectory. There may be parishioners who were not able to contribute during their absence and may now return and make up for those weeks with a larger donation. There's no doubt that the future of the parish depends on our response. Spiritually and financially we want to restore your confidence in the vitality of Our Lady, Star of the Sea Parish in Marblehead.

**Over, please. . .**

We have decided that those coming to Mass will be welcomed at the church door (we can only use one entrance and it will be the Handicap ramp on the rectory side of the church). We may only have 100 people present for any Mass as we observe social distancing in the pews. Families are allowed to sit together. There will be ushers to assist you and direct you to your seat. Everyone must wear a mask during Mass. The church door will open 15 minutes before Mass begins. The church will be cleaned and disinfected following each Mass. Those in line before the door opens must socially distance themselves. There will be no Missalettes or Hymnals present, and bulletins will only be given out as you leave the church. You may exit by any door. There will be arrows on the floor for traffic flow and to make Communion more convenient and orderly. The priest will not greet parishioners at the entrance, and there will be no processions. Music will be minimal and there will be no congregational singing. The only time anyone is allowed in the Sacristy is to use the restrooms. We strongly encourage you to use the bathroom before coming to Mass. We will attempt to have hand sanitizer available, but feel free to bring your own. We discourage social gatherings before or after Mass. Those choosing to receive Communion will come to the altar, socially distancing, with a mask on. They will receive Communion in their hands, lower the mask, consume the host, and return the mask on their face. No one receiving Communion is allowed to wear gloves. The Blood of Christ will not be available (unless someone has a celiac condition). There is no Sign of Peace. The collection will not be taken up during Mass. Parishioners are encouraged to place their donations in the basket at the church entrance either as they enter or exit the facility. We thank Massachusetts authorities, the Center for Disease Control (CDC), and the Archdiocese of Boston for their leadership and guidelines.

For many reasons, I do not anticipate great throngs as we begin this process. We apologize if anyone has to be turned away if we are at capacity. We need to be ready to experience the Sunday Mass in a very different atmosphere. This will not be easy for you or me. We are all victims of habit. It is hard to understand why things can't be the way they were, but our priority is everyone's physical and emotional health, along with their spiritual health. There are a lot of wonderful people working hard behind the scenes to make you feel as welcome as possible.

You may not receive this letter before our first weekend at church. Please feel free to call us with any questions or concerns.

We value your faith and we are blessed with your presence.

You may also be interested to know our new pastor, Monsignor Tim Moran, will be arriving at Our Lady, Star of the Sea Parish on September 1. We look forward to his ministry among us. Hopefully, by that time, we will be well on our way in the recovery process.

The weather is finally warming up in Marblehead.

Enjoy the summer!  
See you in church!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ron Coyne". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Father Ron Coyne

RDC/kjt