



ST. PAUL OF THE CROSS

AS FOR ME AND MY HOUSE, WE WILL SERVE THE LORD
JOSHUA 24:15

June 27, 2020

Dear Parishioners,

Welcome Back! I can't begin to tell you how great it is to see your familiar (albeit masked) faces! It's hard to believe it's been over three months since we last celebrated Mass together. As we return to Mass, in addition to the temperature checks, masks, marked pews and social distancing, you may have also noticed some changes to the music throughout Mass, most notable, no singing.

Since the Second Vatican Council, the importance of congregational singing has been a top priority for music ministers in the Catholic Church. There are comprehensive documents, most recently, *Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship*, published in 2007 by the United States Council of Catholic Bishops that emphasize how crucial music and congregational participation is to the liturgy. And we all know the words of St. Augustine who said, "He who sings, prays twice."

As Fr. Britto mentioned in a letter welcoming us back to public Mass, as mandated by the Archdiocese of Chicago, singing is not allowed. Given the emphasis music ministers place on singing, the idea of actually asking our congregations not to sing feels counter-intuitive. But most of the peer-reviewed research suggests that even when wearing masks, the chance of disease transmission is much higher when singing. This is because when we sing, we are forcibly expelling droplets and much smaller particles known as aerosols from our lungs. The aerosols pose the most danger because when singing, they can be expelled over 20 feet and may hang in the air for over an hour. This can increase a churchgoer's risk of infection.

It's for this reason (and because they can't be effectively sanitized between Masses), all hymnals and missalettes have been removed from the pews. A few other changes include:

1. Hymns/songs are not announced
2. Shorter opening and closing hymns
3. The Glory to God is spoken
4. No invitations to sing on the Responsorial Psalm and Gospel Acclamation
5. Instrumental music during the Offertory
6. Unfamiliar Eucharistic Acclamations (*to further discourage singing*)

I know for many, these changes may be upsetting. But please keep in mind, all the changes happening to the Mass are temporary. These changes will not last forever. As a colleague of mine said, "Don't think of this as 'the new normal.' Think of this as a step between nothing and returning to the kind of worship we will have when the pandemic is behind us."

All the best,

Ed Eicker
Director of Music