

# ST MATTHEW

CATHOLIC CHURCH AND NEWMAN CENTER



May 19, 2021

Dear Parishioners,

I know that it has been a strange year for all of us. On behalf of my fellow clergy members and staff, I thank you for your patience as we have tried to balance health concerns with the ministry needs of our parishioners.

Bishop Parkes has directed the pastors of our Diocese of Savannah, in accordance with the best practices issued by the medical community, to lift some of the stricter guidelines that have been in place during the height of the pandemic. As our case numbers continue to remain very low and vaccinations continue, we have begun the process of making changes that will allow us to accommodate the return of more and more parishioners to in-person Masses.

Beginning with Pentecost weekend (May 22/23), we will remove the ropes that have helped us maintain a six foot distance between pews. Current Centers for Disease Control guidance recommends 3 feet. I would still encourage households to maintain a three foot distance within a single pew. We will also now have two Communion lines at the main aisle.

We are working on other things as we return to “normal”; however, many of those require more extensive planning, training, and scheduling. For example, seminarian Kevin Brasky will work with altar servers to ensure existing servers are comfortable serving and that new servers are confident in beginning ministry. Some of our long-time ushers have “retired” so we are working to add new team members and to conduct the appropriate training and background checks. A job description for a new pianist is in development as well.

Some of you may still feel uncomfortable in larger groups indoors. In order to offer an environment to accommodate those concerns, we will continue to offer the 6 pm Mass on Sunday evenings. Many of our Catholic Eagles have gone home for the summer, so the attendance at that Mass is much smaller. While there is no substitute for receiving Jesus in the Eucharist or being a part of the parish community face-to-face, we will continue to offer the 10:30 am Mass via livestream each week for those who are immunocompromised, are ill, or homebound.

If you have questions or concerns, please contact me at [jjohnson@diosav.org](mailto:jjohnson@diosav.org) or at the parish office: 912-681-6726 ext. 213. I ask your continued prayers for an end to the pandemic and the consolation of those who have suffered or lost loved ones due to Covid-19.

Sincerely Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Fr. John R. Johnson".

Fr. John R. Johnson, VF  
Pastor