



# CHURCH OF ST. RAPHAEL

7301 Bass Lake Road • Crystal, Minnesota 55428  
Office (763) 537-8401 • [www.straphaelcrystal.org](http://www.straphaelcrystal.org)

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May 26, 2020

Dear wonderful parishioners of the Church of St. Raphael,

I hope this letter finds you well and enjoying this beautiful Easter Season and Spring! **Praise God that we can now have up to 250 people at Mass and other parish gatherings!**

**We are doing our best to provide an environment that minimizes the risk of the spread of disease.** Before and after every Mass, surfaces that people touch like pews, doorknobs and push plates, handrails and bathroom sinks and counters will be disinfected. Two out of every three pews are taped off. Doors to the nave (worship area) of the church will be designated “entrance” or “exit.” The family rooms (cry rooms) will be closed. There will not be congregational singing because the act of singing could result in someone who is infected with COVID-19 propelling the virus further ahead than if he or she were just speaking the Mass responses. Only priests will distribute Holy Communion, and they will wear masks while doing so. If he accidentally touches the hand or tongue of the communicant, the priest will purify his fingers in water and then hand sanitizer at a table in the sanctuary before giving Holy Communion to the next person.

**For your part, the Archdiocese states that you should stay home if you are over 65 years old or have a preexisting health condition, that you should wear a mask while in the church building—except, obviously, while in the process of receiving Holy Communion—and should receive the Body of Christ in the hand. *Please keep in mind that the word “should” is a prudential judgment of what is considered most appropriate, that is, the safest thing to do, considering the risk of getting seriously sick from COVID-19 or infecting other people with it. But these “shoulds” are not absolute requirements. They should be taken very seriously, but don’t mean “must” or “have to.”*** The Archdiocese also strongly urges that face masks be worn by everyone in church (but not by those under the age of two, because, according to the CDC, it may put them at risk of suffocation.) Please sit at least six feet apart from anyone who doesn’t live in your household.

**For everyone who does come for Mass on Saturday afternoon or Sunday, please enter the nave (worship area) of the church from the east gathering space, so we can keep track of how many are coming in and limit the number to no more than 250.** To help with this, the outside doors to the church, on the west and north sides, will be locked. (You will still be able to go out of them.) When entering the building, please use the doors by Marian Hall, on the east side, downstairs, or the office entrance, on the west side, upstairs.

Distribution of Holy Communion will be done differently. It will be after Mass. Immediately after the final blessing and the usual other prayers, the priest celebrant will go into the sacristy, take off his chasuble, wash his hands, put on a mask, then return to the sanctuary, along with the other priest. At that point, those who wish to receive Holy Communion should come forward, keeping six feet away from those in front of you, unless you are in the same household. Green

“X”s have been put on the floor to help you with this.. If you are in a wheelchair, one of the priests will bring the Body of Christ to you. Otherwise, proceed to the Communion rail and line up along it, as usual, again keeping at least six feet from the person to your side unless you belong to the same household. When the Communion rail is fully occupied, wait in the center aisle until everyone has left the section of the Communion rail in front of you. **Please do not line up in front of the first pew.** After you have received Holy Communion, you may leave the building or return to your pew for prayer and meditation. Please do not visit with each other in the building—save that for the parking lot.

For those who bring their tithes and offerings to Mass, there may be baskets for that purpose set in the openings of the Communion rail, or the ushers may take up a collection using long-handled baskets, depending on how many ushers are available.

To try to make sure as many people as possible have access to Mass, **we will be adding an extra Mass on Sunday—at 12:30 pm.** Otherwise, the Mass schedule will be what it was before the cancellation of public Masses, except that there will no longer be Mass at 6:30 am on Wednesdays, because of the difficulty of having enough time to purify the pews before then and again before the 8:00 am Mass.

I hope this letter will put many of you at ease about returning to Mass at St. Raphael’s if you are able to do so. **But the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation remains suspended, so please don’t feel guilty if you choose to stay away from Mass because of concerns about COVID-19.** If you or someone in your family would prefer to receive Holy Communion away from Mass, please let Fr. Altier or me know.

Please join me in giving thanks to God for the resumption of public Masses in Minnesota, and for the good will, hard work and cooperation of Archbishop Hebda and the other Minnesota bishops and religious leaders, and Governor Walz and his team, that have helped make this possible. And let’s continue to pray for an end to the COVID-19 pandemic, for all those affected by it, for health care workers, and for the continued guidance by our loving Father in heaven of the leaders of our Church, state, nation and world. And, of course, let’s pray for one another.

God bless you! I look forward to seeing many of you at Mass again, and if not there, somewhere else!

Sincerely in Christ,



Fr. Michael Rudolph, Pastor