

Response to Bishop's Instruction

If there is anything that is certain in today's world it is the fact that things are constantly changing. As you know Bishop Degrood is lifting the dispensation for attending Sunday Mass starting on the weekend of August 23-23. With this announcement many questions may arise in the minds and hearts of the faithful. I would like to address some of the concerns that you may have.

1. Who should attend Sunday Mass?

In his instructions to the faithful Bishop Degrood acknowledges that there is a certain portion of the faith community that should avoid Mass attendance due to serious health concerns. Each individual and family will have to make this decision as a matter of conscience.

Bishop Degrood does make the distinction between having real health concerns versus having a fear of getting sick. But again it will be up to you to decide. I would think that an appropriate measure would be: if you are going to work and your kids are going to school you should be able to attend Mass. **As is always the case if you are sick you should stay home.**

2. How will social distancing be maintained if everybody comes back to Mass?

Bishop Degrood has asked that we maintain proper hygiene and appropriate social distancing while planning for larger crowds. This may be difficult but this is my plan, if it works it should increase seating capacity while respecting individual concerns:

- a) The main body of the church will be divided into two distinct halves: COVID Concerned and Not COVID Concerned. There will be signs designating each area. The COVID concerned area will still only allow seating in every other pew. The not concerned area will allow for seating in every pew. The six feet distancing rule will only be followed in the COVID concerned areas.
- b) The gathering spaces in Holy Spirit and Holy Family, as well as the basement of Holy Family, will be designated as COVID Concerned and will be reserved as such.

3. Should we wear masks?

Bishop Degrood strongly recommends that masks be worn by the faithful but they are not required. I leave that to individual discretion. Priests and deacons are not to wear mask per the Bishop's instructions.

I would ask that you make every effort to use hand sanitizer as you come into the church.

4. Lectors, Servers, Eucharistic Ministers, Ushers.

Bishop Degrood's instructions are that we are to normalize the use of lay faithful in their appropriate liturgical roles. **However before we start scheduling I would ask that if you call the parish offices and tell the staff if you feel comfortable fulfilling these roles. These positions are always voluntary but especially so at this time. If you are willing**

to serve please let us know. This will avoid scheduling people and then not have them show up.

5. Use of the building for gatherings.
Bishop DeGrood has instructed that church facilities be made available for normal operations such as religious education and group meetings such as Knights of Columbus and Catholic Daughters. I give permission for any parish group to begin normal operation and use of the building as seen appropriate by leadership and members of the organization.
6. Funeral Dinners.
There are no specific instructions concerning funeral dinners. As the Pastor of both parishes I have decided that funeral dinners will not be held until further notice. Recent events indicate that the dinner is a major opportunity for infection. I will re-evaluate this in January.
7. Fundraisers and parish events.
Decisions to hold such events will be made with consultation of pastor and organizations involved.
8. Communion to the Homebound.
While some facilities such as Brady Home and Firesteel remain closed to outside visitors it is now possible to begin taking communion to the homebound. To avoid exposure we will take communion to one person or home per day. I am open to volunteers who would be assigned to take communion to only one person or household. **The more volunteers we would have the greater opportunity for the homebound to receive the Eucharist on a weekly basis. If you would be willing to volunteer for this ministry please call the office.**

I doubt that I have answered every question that you might have. If there is a question that you would like addressed call or email me at your convenience. Contact information is in both parish bulletins.

Finally I would ask for your continued prayers for the end of the pandemic. Ask that the all-powerful Father set us free from this and all maladies of mind, body, and spirit. Amen.

Fr. Ken