

Dear Parishioners,

The Governor has given permission to open up our school in a face to face environment- that certainly is good news for both students who want to get back to school and parents who want them in school. Mr. Ward and I have been in contact with the Diocesan School Office in Grand Rapids and the Mecosta County Health Dept. regularly through ZOOM. Before going on, **I want to emphasize that having school open, doesn't mean that we have defeated the Covid-19 virus.** It will be with us for a long time! We are taking the following measures to prevent its spread: limiting the number of people allowed into the school, disinfecting the classrooms every four hours, having the students wear a mask when bunched together or in the halls and other public places in the school, washing their hands on a periodic basis (portable wash basins are being installed in the classrooms). An isolation room has been set aside for a child who shows signs of the virus until he or she is picked up by their parents.

Parents will also play a major role in keeping the virus out of the school. They will be required to do three things: **they must take their child's temperature before sending them to school.** If they show any signs of illness, it is best to keep them home and monitor their conditions. After a few days if their child has improved they can return to school. It is better to keep the child home for a few days rather than risking the 10- 14-day quarantine mandated by the health department. Parents **need to send the child to school with a mask (and a back-up mask).** Disposable masks should be used only once and discarded, cloth masks can be washed and reused. Students should come to School with a clean mask each day. Finally, **parents need a back-up plan.** When they discover that their child is running a temperature just prior to stepping on to the bus or car, parents will need to make arrangements with work to stay home or find a sitter.

All these procedures will not guarantee that our students and families will be safe from the virus. We have been told to prepare for out-breaks that may lead to the closure of the school for a period of time. In that event, our teachers are prepared to continue to teach their students online. Our goal is to keep the virus at a minimum and all the while keeping everyone safe! This will be an unusual year to say the least for everyone, but I hope that we can do our part to slow the spread and offer some sense of being normal. Holy Mary, Mother of God, help us all!

Bob Lint is now home from his 5 week stay in the hospital from the Covid-19 virus- thank God. He and his wife are quarantined until the health department approves their release from this quarantine. As you listen to their story and battle against this virus, it is truly amazing. They have repeatedly told me that it is only by the grace of God and our prayers that Bob is with us today. We continue to pray for his recovery and pray that others may likewise have a similar outcome.

I am beginning to see more and more people feeling comfortable in returning to Mass. That is really great news. I am told that the Archbishop of Detroit has extended the dispensation from Mass for a period of time- with one condition. The condition is those who are able to get out and go to work or the restaurants, bars and stores (for non-essential items) are expected to come to Mass. I expect our bishop to make the same provision if and when he extends the dispensation for our diocese. Masks will still need to be worn at all times within the Church. I know there are those who cannot wear a mask, watching the Mass on television or the computer is another option. I am having my homily taped and put on the parish website as well. For those who have been staying away from the Mass- at what point should you return? Especially in light of our activities that take place outside the house! The bishop has also said for those who don't feel comfortable around large crowds, the weekday Mass is an option as well for meeting your Sunday Obligation. If you have some underlying conditions which might compromise your health, then stay home, just as you should be when getting out for only essential items. You can either call the parish

office or go online to register for Mass. You can have your name added to a list in which will automatically register you for your regular Mass time, thus saving you from calling in week after week.

We are in need of people to help us at the Mass. We are looking for individuals who are willing to come to Church an hour early to register people coming to Mass as well as people to escort parishioners and guests to their pews, to the reception of Holy Eucharistic and dismissing people from their pews after Mass. If you are able to help us in one or more of these ministries, please contact John Mayer. Your help is greatly appreciated!

Last Saturday, we had a beautiful First Communion Mass- five of our children received Jesus for the first time! I want to thank Ms. Snyder for her work with these children. It was good to see some of the parents of these children who had been previous students of Ms. Snyder. We continue to pray for our First Communicants that they may always hunger for the Bread of Life found only in the Eucharist. I also want to thank our Knights of Columbus for presenting them with their own First Communion book to assist them with praying the Mass.

Please stay healthy and well. Peace- Fr. Tom