

Dear Parishioners,

Last week Bishop Walkowiak extended the dispensation for Catholics regarding Sunday Mass until Oct. 18. He also added: “those who are truly able to attend Mass should begin to return, remembering that we are transformed by being joined to Christ in the Eucharist.” This dispensation comes shortly after the release of a report from three doctors from the Thomistic Institute Working Group on Infectious Disease Protocols for Sacraments & Pastoral Care. They issued the following:

“For Catholic churches following the guidelines, no outbreaks of COVID-19 have been linked to church attendance, even though we have examples... of asymptomatic, unknowingly infected individuals attending mass and other parish functions.”

They go on to say: “This encouraging news should inspire confidence that the guidelines in place- based on CDC recommendations- are working to decrease COVID-19 transmission. While nothing during a pandemic is risk-free, these guidelines mean that Catholics (and public officials) may be confident that it’s reasonably safe to come to Church for Mass and the sacraments.”

They reported that there is no evidence that church services are higher risk than similar activities when the guidelines are followed: “To date, the evidence does not suggest that Church attendance- following the current guidelines- is any riskier than shopping for groceries. And the spiritual good for believers in coming to Church is immeasurably important for their well-being.”

This study is good news because it was feared that churches were and are super-spreaders of the Covid-19 virus. However, the study concludes: “**when the guidelines are followed**, people can receive the spiritual comfort of church attendance while preventing the spread of the virus.” That’s why it is important to continue to wear masks and keep socially distant.

We will continue to require that you register before by logging on to the *Sign Up Genius* or call the parish office. Those who did not register are welcome as long as there is room in the church. You can have your name added to a list which will automatically register you for your regular Mass time. This way you won’t have to register each week, call the parish office or talk to the registrar at the door of the church. However, please call the parish office if you’re not coming to that Mass. Masks are available in the church for those who forgot to bring theirs- thanks to some wonderful donors. Hand sanitizer is provided for you to clean your hands before entering the church. Also, after each Mass, we have volunteers going throughout the church and sanitizing everything. We are doing everything we can to keep our church safe from infection.

I would just like to re-iterate the bishop’s message that maybe it’s time for those who are in good health to return to the Mass. The dispensation was not meant to be a free pass from Mass, but for those whose health maybe compromised. And if we are no longer able to accommodate the return of more parishioners, I would love to add another Mass or two to the schedule until we are all able to come without restrictions. If you have returned to work, school, or to the malls, perhaps its time to return to the Mass. We all need to get back to Mass and receive the graces and blessings that get us through the week!

Last week, I offered a reflection on the Eucharist and I would like to offer another. As I gaze upon the bruise, broken and lifeless body of Jesus on the cross, my thoughts turned to a song that we would often sing about the Bread being broken and shared. Prior to the reception of the Eucharist, the priest breaks the bread that has now been consecrated and is the Body of Christ. This is a powerful reminder that Jesus has given His Body for us. He has sacrificed His life that we might live. There are a few times when there are not enough Consecrated Hosts for everyone and the Minister of the Eucharist is

forced to break the Body of Christ into halves and even quarters. It doesn't happen often. Sometimes we might take offense when we are not used to this happening. On the other hand, by sharing a portion of the Eucharist with another parishioner, we are doing what Jesus did. He shared His life with us, and we are passing Divine Life on to someone else. This is a powerful moment and an act of selfless love. That becomes the key to the Eucharist. As we leave church and return to our families or communities, we are called to serve and not be served, to be self-giving not selfish. I invite you to reflect upon the cross, especially the love of Christ who willingly gave of Himself for us. How can that act of love be reflected in our actions to family and community?

As we pass out palms this weekend, I invite you to place them in a special place in your home. Let's use these palms as a sign of our willingness to welcome Jesus into our homes as did the crowds who welcomed Him to Jerusalem.

Please be safe over this Labor Day weekend. I encourage you to come to the Monday morning Mass and pray for our country. You will still need to register and wear a mask. Peace... Fr. Tom