

**Companions on the Journey**

May 31 2020

Dear Friends in Christ

As of this writing the consensus seems to be building for a re-opening of Parish Eucharistic celebrations for parishioners next weekend, the first weekend in June. There is a part of me that just cannot wait. I miss seeing all of you, praying with you, being with you, greeting you. It has been a long dry spell. Once we are allowed to embrace each other once again it will be a great blessing.

It would be wonderful, of course, if we were able just to re-open our doors and invite everyone to return. But we all know that it will not be that simple. While the coronavirus has affected all of us, it has not affected all of us in the same way. That is surely understandable because we all bring our own life experiences with us into situations like this one.

Some of you will want to be the first ones in the door and willing to sit up front. Others will be more measured. Others may not return until any difficulties have been ironed out and there is a smooth approach to worship. There will be questions. How do we observe social distancing while in church? How long will this social distancing be expected to be observed? When will we begin to sense that we are relatively safe again in a group of people? Even a large group of people? Are we allowed to sing? Do we have to wear masks? All throughout Mass? How do we go to communion then? These are just a few that our Staff has been identifying. There are many others and we will make reasonable decisions.

We will be communicating with you a variety of protocols that we will be observing. We will post them on FaceBook and Flock Note them and upload them onto the parish website. We ask that you do your best to familiarize yourself with these protocols and to observe them. Until they become more familiar to us they may be awkward or even irritating. But let us err on the side of caution in our observing them. Let us also remember that sometimes we forget and sometimes others do too. Sometimes there is not full agreement about what should be done and why. But let us seek to be patient with each other and gentle with each other and kind with each other.

I think we are all very well familiar with the secularization of our culture and at times even the politicization of our culture. We don't want to bring those dimensions into our spiritual lives or our family's spiritual experience unnecessarily so let's resolve not to politicize our return to Mass on Sunday.

**There is an additional big change and that has to do with the reduction in Masses from three on Sunday morning to two on Sunday morning. The new Mass schedule will be 8:15 and 10:30. So on the weekend there will continue to be confessions from 4PM until 5PM, Vigil Mass at 5:15. Sunday morning 8:15 and 10:30.**

We will weather all of this but the most important thing is that we recognize the centrality and significance of the Mass in our lives as Catholics. Let us make sure we prepare ourselves to receive Holy Communion as worthily as we can. Let us arrive in spirit of gratitude and appreciation for the Bread of Life that feeds us and nourishes us and from which we have been fasting for almost three months. Let us be grateful to God.

Peace, Msgr. McHenry