

November 29, 2020

Dear Friends,

Often when you are gathered at Thanksgiving there is some talk about Christmas and how it will be handled. It is my intention to write to all of the parish families and individuals after Thanksgiving asking you to consider how you will celebrate the great Feast of Christmas and give God the worship of your hearts in appreciation for the sending of his Son. There is time to do some thinking about Mass attendance on Christmas.

Christmas is a little over four weeks away (26 days) and there is always so much to get done. All the usual things of living and earning a living and raising a family and taking care of those who need special assistance. But then there is the shopping and decorating, baking and wrapping. One of the things that we usually try to do is to repeat those things we have discovered hold great meaning for us or make our lives go a little more smoothly. Christmas Mass, who we go with (immediate family, extended family, old friends, etc.), what particular Mass we attend (Christmas Eve Family Mass, Christmas Carol Mass, first thing Christmas Morning, later on Christmas morning), are all part of the mix. There are many family customs and traditions.

This year, however, there is a very fundamental question that has to be addressed first of all. Are you as a family actually going to attend Christmas Mass live and in person or are you going to stay home and celebrate by means of a Live-streaming of the Mass into your own homes? Given the corona-virus situation at present and I am writing this about ten days before you will read it and so a whole lot can change between now and then, it is probably more safe to celebrate virtually but then the actual reception of Holy Communion is omitted. Only a spiritual communion will take place. That is a good thing but not everything.

Others of you will want to risk going to Mass anticipating that the usual crowds of people will not be attending. I believe this thinking is probably accurate. But we will have over flow seating down stairs in Friendship Hall with a livestreaming of Mass from upstairs. Communion will be distributed upstairs and downstairs. We plan to offer this alternative at each of our Christmas Masses if there is need to do so.

What I encourage you to do is to have your family discussion and come to a decision as to whether you will participate live or via live-streaming. If via live-streaming my recommendation to you is to choose which Mass you will be virtually attending as a family, get everybody to put on their Christmas best and gather in one place for the Christmas in-home celebration, and perhaps even create a new little something for your family 's tradition due to the corona-virus. We will have Christmas Eve Masses at 4PM and at 8:30PM. Christmas Day Mass will be at 8:15 or 10:30. Rather than deciding to stay in your pajamas or just tune into a stored Live-stream Mass it is better to participate in real time. Better also to get dressed up to celebrate the greatest gift the world has ever received. Go the extra mile at Christmas this year the way you go the extra mile for Christmas every year even if what you are doing is different.

Be ready to celebrate at the time you have chosen. There will be some sacrifices but they are all part of the celebration of the day. Christ and his family made their own Christmas Day sacrifices. I just want to encourage all of you to do some early thinking on this subject. And as you know, everything is subject to change given what the Federal Government and the Commonwealth also recommend or decide.

Peace,

Msgr. McHenry