

**October 24, 2021**

Dear Friends in Christ,

Recently I received an email from a parishioner who brought to my attention a very simple conundrum. It had to do with the corona virus. It also had to do with bringing children back to church. Most children are not vaccinated for the corona-virus and are not able to be. That does not mean that they cannot get the covid19. So even our few altar servers who come to help us at Mass each Sunday still wear masks. They do not want to catch the virus and they do not want to infect anyone with the virus.

We have all read a great deal about mask-wearing and most of us have made up our minds about their "effectiveness." Archbishop Perez has not re-instated the wearing of masks at Mass but has allowed each person attending to decide for themselves. And that is what we have been doing. What this parishioner did was to raise the question about whether parents feel their children are safe when brought into an indoor setting such as Church surrounded by a good number of people who are not wearing masks.

We have no real way of knowing who is and who is not vaccinated for the Covid19. I am not going to try to discern this. The question that has arisen in me is this: Even though I have received the two vaccination shots and therefore am at lower risk of catching the virus and spreading the virus, would I be willing, for the sake of the return of the children, to wear a mask before Mass, during the distribution of Holy Communion, and after Mass? I don't really like wearing a mask but for the sake of the children I will. And so that is what I am going to do.

What I ask you to consider is this: For the sake of the return of the children would you be willing, voluntarily, to wear a mask while at Mass? This is not a mandate. But it does seem to fit in with the gospel for today. The blind man sitting by the side of the road, almost invisible but with a real and genuine need. He calls out to Jesus and Jesus stops, listens, and cures him. Jesus always seems to extend a hand to heal the ones most in need.

For us at this time it is the children who are still at risk and therefore still in need. For the sake of the children, would you at least consider my request to wear a mask at Mass? At least for the present time? We can revisit when the coast is clear. I request your consideration and your prayer.

Peace

Msgr. McHenry