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Companions on the Journey

November 7, 2021

Dear Friends in Christ,

A couple of weeks back I was contacted by a parishioner about bringing their children back to church where most people are no longer wearing masks and masks are not mandated in such gatherings. The point was made that because most children are not vaccinated, are going to school and wearing masks there to lower the possibility of contacting the corona virus, that it was difficult to bring little ones into a closed in place where most people are not wearing masks. And so I said I would bring this to you and ask those of you who are present if you would be willing to wear masks here even though you do not have to, and probably do not want to, but for the sake of the return of the children.

The next Sunday I noticed that there were many more parishioners who were wearing their masks here. I also noticed that there were more families with their children present. It warmed my heart to see. I know it warmed your heart to see. Thanks to all of you who made the sacrifice. I know, from talking to some of you, that you personally are not convinced of the efficacy of wearing masks at all. Others are convinced that mask-wearing is a vital deterrent. I tend to err of the side of safety. If my wearing a mask can raise the comfort level for others who believe themselves to be very much at risk in a gathering where most are not wearing masks, then for the sake of the little ones and for the sake of a tender conscience on the part of a parishioner who also wants to be able to find a way back to Eucharist, I will wear a mask before Mass and after Mass and at the distribution of Communion. Otherwise we have been told not to wear a mask in the sanctuary.

As you can see all of this is difficult to navigate. But one thing is for certain. We have to stop judging other people—either for wearing masks or for not wearing masks. We just have to stop presuming we know what the other person should do just because we are sure what we should do. It does not necessarily follow. Why have we stopped giving anyone who has a different take on things the benefit of the doubt? Why does there have to be only one way? Aren't there enough circumstances in each family that they can make a decision regarding what they will and will not expose themselves to? Or expose their children to? Can they not come to this decision for very closely held family decisions that do not have to be shared with the rest of the world? Isn't it enough for them to size things up and make their decision?

My friends, the corona virus has been such a trying disease for all of us. Let us not make things more difficult by passing judgments on the decisions of others without our really knowing why they have made the decision they have. Instead, let's pull for each other to get through all of this, as unscathed as possible. Let us pray for each other, for other families that they will find just the right strength to see them through these very difficult days. We truly are all in this together.

Peace,

Msgr. McHenry