

It's been great seeing so many of you back at Mass! And for those of you who are not yet comfortable – please use good common sense – and realize that God reaches out to embrace you just as deeply when you open your heart to Him in your home! As Catholics we all love the sacraments – but we need to always remember that God reached out to the world from eternity through nature, through others, through His Spirit. All of those things remain open to all of us anywhere, anytime. And since we live in such a beautiful part of the world, so many of our backyards are as good a place to encounter God as anywhere!

I've also been gratified that those of you who are coming to Mass have been very cooperative dealing with the various issues we are trying to negotiate.

One of our parishioner/ushers wrote to me offering a couple of reminders/tweaks which I hope you will take to heart to continue ensure the safety of all. Mark Shaefer is a pharmacist who has done research in the antiviral area for the last 27 years. So I think we can trust both his commitment to the parish – and his desire to help us do the best we can. He suggested:

1). While everyone who has entered the church has been masked, remember that you must cover both your nose and mouth – and not put your mask up and down when speaking to others. Otherwise, we defeat the purpose of wearing the mask.

2). It pains me to repeat this part! (JD speaking here!) It might be best if we allowed those in the sanctuary do the singing for us – singing increases the volume of droplets we expel. Many have you have heard of the choir practice in the state of Washington. One infected person infected all 52, and 2 people died. Some of you might say “then why sing at all?” Because music is normative in the Catholic liturgy – it is simply part and parcel of the way we pray when we come together. This has its roots all the way back in the temple liturgy of ancient Israel. The Book of Psalms was their basic hymnbook. Those of you who come to daily Mass realize that I take the musical nature of the liturgy deeply to heart, as we always sing. SO, for the current situation, I would respectfully request that you sing in your head!

3). A reminder for those who distribute communion, and here I directly quote Mark: “the mask should go on BEFORE the gloves are pulled on. Otherwise if a person puts on their gloves and then touches their head or face while putting on the mask that will contaminate the gloves and defeats the purpose.”

And I can't close these remarks any better than to return to Mark's words themselves: “I hope you take these observations in the right way. I am very fond of our parish and am glad we are able to celebrate the mass in person together again. However, I also want to try and assure we don't have anyone get infected as a result of being at Mass.”

Thank you all – I know this is a difficult time – but we ARE GETTING THROUGH IT – together. Peace and blessings to you, dear brothers and sisters in Christ.....