

Moving Along Again.....

On Thursday, September 10, 2020, we received updated directives from Bishop Bambera regarding our faith lives and the coronavirus. Our Bishop has asked that we move ahead with our faith practices, making them more available to as many as can safely take advantage of them. I would like to summarize his directives:

(1) As we move forward, we may find ourselves becoming a little less careful about protecting ourselves and one another. The most important principle for us to follow as we make our sacramental life more available is to strictly adhere to all safety protocols when we come together for worship or to meet.

We are to maintain :

- (a) wearing of the face mask when ever we come together**
- (b) appropriate social distancing**
- (c) proper hand sanitizing**
- (d) sanitizing our churches and facilities before and after each use**

In our Bishop's words, these are non-negotiables.

(2) By October 1, 2020, we are to resume our schedule of Masses which we had before the pandemic began. This means we will begin celebrating the **7:00pm Sunday Mass beginning October 4**. Our capacity in the Basilica remains the same. By adding the additional Mass on Sunday evening, we will be making Mass available to more people.

On Monday, we will have Masses and Novena devotions at 8:00am, 12 Noon, 3:30pm (this is a change from Benediction to Mass), and 6:00pm (this is a change from 5:30pm). Due to the demands of sanitizing the Basilica after each use, we will not resume the 7:30pm Mass and Novena devotion. The 7:30pm Monday Mass intention will be celebrated at the new 3:30pm Mass on Mondays. This will be an experimental schedule through December.

Tuesdays through Fridays, we will continue to have morning Mass at 9:00am and will continue to live stream the Mass. We will resume the 7:00pm Mass beginning Thursday, October 1, 2020.

We will continue to have the 9:00am Mass on Saturdays.

(3) Use of other facilities and rooms in the Basilica and Shrine Center: These may be used as long as all of the safety protocols are observed at all times. Proper sanitizing must be done before and after each use.

(4) Faith formation for our children will continue in virtual mode. Occasional in person meetings of a particular group of students may be permitted as long as all safety protocols are observed at all times.

(5) **Alternate means of parish fundraising** should be investigated to help parishes meet their financial responsibilities.

(6) Parish Offices should be as open and accessible as possible, following all of the safety protocols. For us, that means **we must wear face masks when entering the parish office. If you arrive at the Parish Office and find you have forgotten your mask, please go over to the Shrine Center and one will be provided to you.**

(7) **The elderly who are more vulnerable to the virus along with all those with underlying medical conditions which make them more vulnerable to the gravity of the virus are still strongly encouraged to remain at home and**

pray along with the parish through the live streamed Mass or through Mass on Catholic Television.

(8) The obligation to attend Mass remains suspended at this time.

There were two other areas Bishop Bambera asked us to consider. The first has to do with the **second collections**. Without doubt, income through the second collections has suffered greatly because of the pandemic. At the same time, the expenses which those collections addressed have remained constant. I would ask you to do what you are able to maintain some amount of giving to these second collections. I and the Bishop are deeply grateful for all of your past generosity. We ask for your continuing consideration.

The second area for us to consider is, amazingly enough, **our Advent and Christmas celebration**. We are anticipating that our safety protocols will still be in place by that time. We would want to make Christmas Mass available to as many as possible. Our parish council will be dealing with this issue shortly. I will be recommending that our most fruitful option will be to increase the number of Masses we offer for Christmas Eve and Christmas day. Remember, we will only be able to have 130 in the Basilica for each Mass and sitting outdoors doesn't seem like an option on December 25. For these Masses, we may need to have reservations for what may be considered the more popular times. Our parish council will be dealing with recommendations for all of this.

During this past month, we have been able to move ahead with a number of weddings which were re-arranged from later times because of the threat of the virus. Several have had to be postponed because of virus related issues. We have also moved ahead with baptizing our newest members. We are permitted to have baptisms one family at a time. Consequently, every weekend has baptisms during September and three weekends in October so far. This is a great grace and cause for great joy for our parish. During this month, we have also been able to celebrate the lives of a good many who have died. Some died earlier in the pandemic while others have died more recently. Some have died after a long illness and others have died suddenly. All of our celebrations for the families have experienced a mix of sadness and hope as we lifted their loved ones up to the Lord in prayer.

Please continue to pray for all of our newlyweds, our newly baptized, and our brothers and sisters who have gone home to the Lord.

In October, I will be asking our parish council to help me in deciding to re-start some of our parish groups and committees. I will also be asking for ideas for re-starting opportunities for adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and devotional prayers before the Blessed Sacrament.

UNTIL THEN, PRAY FOR THE INTERCESSION OF SAINT ANN AND SAINT PAUL OF THE CROSS AND PLEASE MAINTAIN YOUR VIGILANCE IN KEEPING YOURSELF SAFE AND HELPING TO KEEP ONE ANOTHER SAFE. BLESSINGS TO YOU ALL.