

Values for Discernment

Governor Gordon issued a revision to statewide health orders, which took effect June 15, and which may be revised or before June 30. There is some conflicting guidance in the order – namely the requirements of face coverings, 6 ft. of distance maintained, and gatherings not larger than 50 people (whether indoor or outdoor), while religious or faith-based organizations are exempted from these requirements.

The practice of virtue is key as a body of faith united in Christ. Explanations of how we have been applying these values, virtues, and practices are below to cultivate a shared frame of reference. With each description is a question to guide prayer.

Value/Practice	Understanding and Application
Preferential Option for the Poor and Vulnerable	<p>Christ showed compassion to the poor and needy, identifying himself with the “least.” He said, <i>“Whatever you did to the least brothers of mine, you did to me.”</i> (Mt. 25).</p> <p>In the pandemic, the most vulnerable include the sick, elderly, homebound, those with health conditions, the unemployed, the uninsured, minorities, etc.</p> <p>Do I act in a way that is mindful of Christ who dwells in the least? Do I promote the principle of “survival of the fittest,” or do I treat the weakest members of society with the preferential love of God?</p>
Communion in Christ	<p>We need to prioritize our communion in the Body of Christ over the prevailing social discourse that segments people into parties, camps, or ideologies. Unity is greater than uniformity; yet, to preserve the health of all, we are called to practice unity to ensure our Communion as the local Church of Wyoming.</p> <p>How does our communion with those who will join us only if they feel safe, or who cannot join us in liturgy, guide our decisions about how we celebrate the sacraments?</p>
Solidarity	<p>In the Encyclical <i>Sollicitudo Rei Socialis</i>, Pope Saint John Paul II described solidarity in the following way:</p> <p>“It is above all a question of interdependence, . . . a system determining relationships in the contemporary world, in its economic, cultural, political and religious elements, and accepted as a moral category. When interdependence becomes recognized in this way, the correlative response as a moral and social attitude, as a ‘virtue,’ is <i>solidarity</i>. [It] is not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of . . . people, both near and far. On the contrary, it is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say to the good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all” (38).</p>

	<p>How might we increase in clergy and laity alike a “firm and persevering determination” to the common good, that is, to fellow Catholics and to society-at-large, fellow citizens of the state and nation?</p>
<p>Subsidiarity</p>	<p>The principle of subsidiarity offers insight into how the diocese relates to parishes. This principle maintains,</p> <p>“A community of a higher order should not interfere in the internal life of a community of a lower order, depriving the latter of its functions, but rather should support it in case of need and to help co-ordinate its activities with the activities of the rest of society, always with a view to the common good” (CCC 1883).</p> <p>The highest level of authority should not usurp the initiative, freedom, and responsibility at lower levels. Subsidiarity calls on higher-level authorities to help individuals and intermediate groups to fulfil their duties (<i>Compendium of Social Doctrine, 186</i>).</p> <p>How can we best coordinate our activities for the good of our local Church and of our society?</p>
<p>Co-responsibility</p>	<p>By Baptism, every Catholic is co-responsible for the mission of Christ. Every disciple is co-responsible for our communion in Christ, the common good, protection of the vulnerable, the health of all, etc.</p> <p>Does each baptized person think and act as one who is co-responsible? Does local parish leadership take responsibility for the policies that protect the common good?</p>
<p>Personal Responsibility</p>	<p>While the Catholic Church has used the language of <i>rights</i> for several decades, it has also used the language of <i>responsibility</i> alongside it. Individuals – especially as members of the Mystical Body of Christ – do have the responsibility to preserve each other’s health and opportunity for human flourishing.</p> <p>What will help people understand that responsibility to others is just as valued in our tradition as personal rights?</p>
<p>Social Responsibility</p>	<p>While individuals have clear responsibilities to each other, our Church also has a larger, social responsibility. The way we gather together will have national impact, as people will quite likely return to their places of work, recreation, and families after they are sent at the conclusion of liturgy. If we do not observe good practices in our liturgical celebrations – especially during tourist season – we risk putting an uncountable number of people at risk.</p> <p>How do we hope our Church will be remembered on the other side of this crisis in terms of our care for our neighbors through good practice?</p>

Agility	<p>This pandemic remains outside of our control in many ways. So, we need to adapt to circumstances as they change and understand that different levels of the virus' spread warrant different responses.</p> <p>If cases spiked, and the parish needed to suspend liturgical celebrations, would the parish be ready and able to respond?</p>
Consistency	<p>To preserve our communion, seek solidarity, and encourage co-responsibility, we desire that our local Church be consistent in its response so that the faithful are not made afraid by the rhetoric or actions that greatly differ from their own local community. Additionally, to preserve the health of all and remain united in worship, we need practices for all Catholics to adopt.</p> <p>Would claiming exemption from orders help the people of God understand the severity of the pandemic?</p>
Physical Distancing	<p>As a recent event in Uinta county shows, gatherings of large numbers of people in a confined space creates the prime atmosphere for the transmission of the coronavirus. To preserve the lives of faithful and our worship, physical distancing is a needed practice, despite the administrative burden it causes.</p> <p>What is the primary opposition to physical distancing, and how can people be assisted in changing their hearts?</p>
Wearing of Face Coverings	<p>Many have opposed the wearing of face coverings because they are uncomfortable, while others do not wear them because they think the practice is an imposition on their rights. Face coverings do not protect the ones wearing them, but rather protect everyone around the ones wearing them. This practice emerges from the values identified at the top of the list.</p> <p>What is the primary opposition to face coverings, and how can people be assisted in changing their hearts?</p>
Consuming Reliable Information	<p>Information about the coronavirus has become politicized. At this time, it is imperative that reliable, fact-based reporting factor into decision-making. One example is a recent article about the outbreak in Uinta County, which details the importance of distancing, face coverings, and responsibility to one's neighbors. It also shows how precarious any gathering can be when not observing these measures. Stay updated through regularly accessing well-researched, highly regarded, and consistent medical advice (e.g., Wyoming State Health, CDC, World Health Organization).</p> <p>What fact-based sources of reporting inform your decisions and ideas about the coronavirus and its impact on our communities?</p>