

PASTOR'S COLUMN
To Mask or Not to Mask — that is the Question!



Our city loves masking, especially at Mardi Gras time. But what about masking to reduce the spread of coronavirus?

Every time we speak, we release millions of microscopic droplets of our breath into the air space around us. The droplets hang in the air space for a time before they dissipate. They dissipate more quickly outdoors and less quickly indoors. Who knew these things? We certainly have heard lots about this in the past two months.

Because of the release and projection of droplets during speech, singing, coughing and sneezing — in order to prevent the spread of the virus — health professionals have urged 6-foot social distancing and the use of facial covering to contain the virus. There are people who are “all in” with the recommendation about facial covering and those who see masks as unnecessary, uncomfortable and an intrusion into their privacy. My thinking is that the medical science backs this concept or else doctors and nurses would not wear masks during surgery and in the hospital setting.

Without denying the science and health information, we have tried to strike a balance at St. Francis with regard to facial covering. We have designated 3 of our 16 weekly Masses as “Mask Required” and the others as “Mask Recommended.”

Wearing a mask is not going to injure us. We can still get the required amount of oxygen through pours in and around the mask. However, having personally worn a mask for a few hours on several occasions, the experience is definitely not a joy. Who wants their hot breath blown back in their face? In the end, though, health must triumph over comfort. Quite a few parishioners are concerned about their health and have told me they won't attend Mass unless the other people at Mass have facial covering.

Thus, we will continue the option of Masses with and without requiring facial covering. We will continue to monitor the situation, study the every-changing data, and pray and seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Thank you for your patience as this issue unfolds.

God Bless,
Fr. Joe