

May 9, 2000: Following the Plan

Yesterday I received from the archdiocesan Office of Worship the 8-page plan for reopening churches and moving toward resumption of public worship. If you are interested in reading the full text of the plan, it is posted front and center on the archdiocesan website at www.archindy.org.

One of the components of the plan is the phased introduction of activities in the church that I mentioned yesterday, with proposed dates for when those things can begin to happen. Already I've noticed that people get fixated on the date as if that's when a certain phase will begin. But the plan is very careful to say that, as of a certain date, that phase *may begin*. Whether it actually will begin depends on whether a particular parish is ready, and in this case readiness is determined by a whole list of conditions listed in Part II of the plan under the heading *Decision-Making Tool for Choosing a Date/Schedule for Reopening Churches and for Resuming Public Liturgical Celebrations*.

Fulfilling those conditions is what I and the staff are currently working on. In my mind the first step in that process is to cordon off two-thirds of the pews in church so that there is a structure in place to ensure social distancing. This corresponds to the plan's directive that "*pastoral leaders are encouraged to utilize the guideline [from the CDC] of 20-30% of capacity in determining the number of those who may be present for liturgies celebrated indoors.*" This condition will remain in effect for the foreseeable future, and at least throughout the summer. My guess is that it will be that way until there is a vaccine. So, we are looking into how to cordon off pews in a tasteful manner, one that fits into the general decorative scheme of the church. Police tape is not an option. :-)

A second effort to make the church ready is to figure out how to apply the CDC guideline that a space be sanitized after each use. Lots of conversation is being expended among the pastoral leaders of the deanery as to how to do that efficiently and without excessive cost. Some good ideas are coming from the civic society where this requirement is already being met.

I am hopeful that we will be able to get things moving forward, but it may not be in the time frame provided by the archdiocesan guidelines. We may end up a week or two behind what is listed there. If any of you have ideas or want to volunteer for the added chores that are called for, please let me know.