

May 11, 2000: Remembering all Our Options

One of the realities that we are facing when it comes to moving from celebrating Mass privately to having it open to at least a portion of the public is that there is pent-up demand for coming back to church. I've had conversations with a number of people about how they can't wait to be able to come to church and celebrate the Eucharist. In some cases, they have even been surprised by the strength of their desire.

And yet, the harsh reality is that we will not be able to accommodate all that demand all at once. The capacity of the church will be so much less than what we are accustomed to that we will not have room for everyone if there is a rush to come to Mass at the first opportunity. From that perspective I thought it would be good to reiterate the options that are available for when Masses in church are again open to the public.

The first option is to wait for the pandemic to end. Some members of the parish are already realizing that, because of their age and/or medical condition, they are not going to be coming to Mass anytime soon. It's just not an option for them. They will have to take solace in the fact that there is a dispensation in place from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass. Watching the Mass being streamed live will be their mode of celebration for the foreseeable future.

The second option is to consider all the alternatives, given the strongly reduced seating capacity in church. Maybe that will entail waiting for a week or two to come to Mass in order to get used to the new environment in which we will now be worshiping. Because of the dispensation from the obligation to attend that would be a viable approach. Not everyone has to be there at the first opportunity. Another option would be to continue to tune in to Mass via the parish website on Sunday and to choose another day to actually come to Mass and participate first-hand in the eucharistic banquet. Since we traditionally only have 20 or so people at daily Mass there is always plenty of room, even if two-thirds of the pews are roped off.

We will have to take things slowly so that we do not put anyone at undue risk. But whatever we do will be moving in the right direction—from no one being able to attend, to someone being able to attend, to finally having everyone back and in their familiar places. Let's pray for that day!