

May 2, 2020

Easter Greetings Everyone,

As we begin public celebrations of the Mass again it will feel a bit strange and restrictive. We are not used to restrictions, especially in the wild, wild west where freedom reigns. This last Thursday the secretary at St. Charles parish, Jane Andersen, was going through the old sacramental books because we have to report their condition to the Diocese. She came across a parish journal from 1916 – 1919. The Pastor of St. Charles made an entry on January 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1919, “The year 1918 (fall) brought us a 9 week quarantine on account of the Spanish Influenza in church and school. This quarantine was fully unnecessary as there were never a very great number of cases in Oakes and vicinity.”

I guess as time goes by some things stay the same. One thing that reoccurs is that there will be disagreement about how to handle these situations, but we have a clear leader who has that responsibility, Bishop John Folda. The Bishop in 1918, Bishop O'Reilly, took a very cautious approach to protect the vulnerable and was it seemed the Pastor of St. Charles in 1918 did not agree with the specifics of his decision? Bishop Folda, like the bishop 101 years ago, has decided on caution to protect the vulnerable and to follow health care professional's recommendations.

Here are some of the precautions Bishop Folda outlines in his guidance as we begin public daily Masses on Monday, May 4<sup>th</sup>:

Social Distancing: Please keep six feet spacing between groups that are not living under the same roof. This includes entering and exiting the Church, as well as during Holy Communion. Please space accordingly in the pews so that you are not directly behind or ahead of other parishioners. Since it is possible that the church would be overfilled when you come, you are not obliged to stay. The usher(s) will assist you with these new guidelines.

Face Coverings: I ask that you wear a face covering (no need to cover the eyes :0). We may be able to secure a limited number of cloth face coverings, please contact me if you are in need of one.

Holy Communion: There will be no EMHC (Extra-ordinary Ministers of Holy Communion). You may remove your face covering to receive communion, which will be in your hands (not on the tongue). I will wear a face covering during Holy Communion.

Other Measures: We will need only one altar server who stays six feet away from the priest, one reader, and two ushers mainly to answer questions if people have not read this letter. This kills me, but there will be no congregational singing so we have removed all hymnals and missalettes. The collection basket will not be passed, and the offertory procession will be omitted. Instead, baskets will be placed at the door for the collection. There will also be no holy water fonts for everybody to dip their hands in, but if you want holy water, please bring your own jar and fill it at the holy water tank.

General Health Measures: We all have been washing our hands more regularly, I think, but if you have hand sanitizer, you may want to bring your own. There will be some sanitizer available here at the church. Those who are vulnerable, have underlying conditions, a cough, or feel sick or run down, are asked not to come to church for their own protection and the protection of others.

To avoid the confined space of the confessional, confessions will be in Oakes at 4:30 pm Saturday, at 8 am Sunday **in the Sacristy**; and in Forman at 5 pm Wednesdays in the **main church space**. Confessions behind the screen is available.

The obligation to attend Mass has been removed for everyone since the beginning of this Pandemic and that removal continues to protect people.

The mandate to keep holy the sabbath is still necessary, so if you are not able to make Mass on Sunday, read the readings and or do the Rosary, or some other devotion. I will continue to put the homilies on the website ([stcharlesoakes.org](http://stcharlesoakes.org) and [stmarysforman.org](http://stmarysforman.org)). I am not sure that we will be able to continue to live stream the Mass on Sundays since it does not work well to use the amplifier and the computer or iPad. You are also encouraged attend Daily Mass, if possible, because there are less people that come.

Let us continue to pray for each other, for the end to this pandemic, and for all those affected by sickness of any kind.

In Easter Hope and Joy,

Fr. Tim Schroeder