

My dear brothers and sisters,

Change is never easy, and it is even more difficult when we had no choice in the matter, when it is thrust upon us. It is also made more difficult when it comes to us in large doses. Then, it is further complicated by the culture we live in and the reality that there is a sense of not being able to trust anyone, given claims by professionals on both sides of the political spectrum. I am asking that we continue to put all that aside and focus on Christ, and our responsibility to worship and give thanks to the One who made us in his image.

Focusing on Christ allows us to keep all things in proper perspective, to see the reality of the world in which we live. The gravity of COVID-19 Pandemic has just recently hit us in a completely new way. Many more people are affected, I have many more connections to people with it. Either way, the fact is that COVID-19 is a serious matter, and we as a parish community **MUST** do what we can in order to mitigate the spread of this virus and to provide a safe environment in which all, those with low risk and those with high risk, might worship our Lord and God.

Therefore, Bishop Walkowiak has issued new guidelines and directives for the Diocese of Grand Rapids. The following apply to all our gatherings for worship. Further directions will be given at individual liturgies.

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- † *The dispensation from the obligation to participate at Sunday Mass and Holy Days of Obligation is extended through Jan. 4, 2021*

 - (if you are feeling ill or are considered “high risk” by the CDC, please stay home)*

 - † *Social distancing must be observed. No physical contact between parishioners of separate households.*

 - If you do not live in that person’s house, then you should be 6, or more, feet away from them.*

 - † *Face coverings are **required** for participation in all worship and parish events.*

 - † *If parishioners would like Holy Water, they may bring water in their own containers to be blessed by a priest/deacon.*

 - † *All faith formation is to be carried out remotely for the remainder of 2020.*

 - † *All are encouraged to carry their own hand sanitizer in personal bottles as much as possible.*

I would like to reiterate the importance of wearing a face covering as well as maintaining 6 feet of distance between households. Studies have shown that these are both effective at mitigating the spread of this virus. Regardless of personal belief, I ask that all follow this as closely as possible to provide a safe space for all to gather and worship our God. I also encourage you all to strongly consider not gathering in person with family members who do not live in your home. I suggest finding ways to contact them via a phone call, a video call, or other manner.

I know that this is difficult! Family is the most important thing for me, and I only miss family events if I have parish responsibilities at the same time. But therefore, I am choosing to not go home for Thanksgiving nor to visit until it is safe to do so.

Let us continue to hold each other in prayer, especially as we prepare to celebrate the Feast of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe this coming Sunday.

Your brother in Christ Jesus,

Rev. Daniel P. Schumaker
Canonical Administrator