

From Our Lady of the Lakes, Pastor's Desk, Father James Holland

My dearest parishioners of Our Lady of the Lakes Parish:

Fear is one of the strongest reactions within the human person because it triggers the “flight or fight” response. To be sure, this is the case regarding the pandemic of the SARS-CoV2 the cause of COVID-19. The pandemic was declared because data out of the United Kingdom predicted 2 million people might die in the United States. However as of July 24th the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported 146,596 deaths, 4,117,913 confirmed cases and 1,228,728 people recovered, illnesses and deaths not forecasted a year ago! Thank God!

And what about our little neck-of-the-woods? Using data from the Allegheny County Health Department and with Larry Scott's assistance we put together a spreadsheet providing weekly numbers regarding West Deer, Richland, Hampton, Indiana, Frazer and Fawn Townships.

So, what should we do? We cannot sustain a way of life in a “fight or flight” mode, if this happens, we witness extreme responses. Extreme responses not grounded in reality. I have witnessed this in our Parish of Our Lady of the Lakes: some say, I don't care, I'm not doing anything; others are wearing something close to a biohazard suit. **I want to be very clear, as a man of faith and of science, I'm not going down either path, I will be using reason grounded in science. As a person who is “vulnerable”, I am not seeking to die a martyr's death!**

We have proven safeguards that are effective! Likewise, there are safeguards which are not proven to be scientifically effective but are recommended by a panel of experts. All of these are legitimate in clinical practice but not necessarily in clinical effectiveness.

1. **Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome-Coronavirus 2, the virus causing COVID-19, is ONLY transmitted by aerosolized respiratory droplets.** Sneezing or coughing aerosolizes respiratory fluids into droplets. Thus, coughing or sneezing on someone can spread the disease. (Known science)
2. If you recently have been around anyone who tested positive for the COVID-19 virus, quarantine yourself and call your doctor or other healthcare provider. (Effective)
3. If you are not feeling well or if you are feeling sick, quarantine yourself and call your doctor or other healthcare provider. (Effective)
4. If you are sick with fever, chills, etc., quarantine yourself and call your doctor or other healthcare provider. (Effective)
5. If you are experiencing a medical emergency, seek hospital care immediately. (Effective)
6. Regularly wash your hands with soap and water. (Effective, when used correctly)
 - a. **Watch a reliable video to learn correct handwashing.** This is your responsibility!
 - b. Wash your hands if you have been out and about, returning home or to the building where you work.
 - c. Wash your hands every 2 hours or more often as needed.
 - d. Your hands must be washed after using the toilet.
7. Use hand sanitizer frequently in-between handwashing. (Effective, when used correctly)
 - a. **Watch a reliable video to learn correct use of hand sanitizer.** This is your responsibility!
 - b. Hand sanitizer does not replace proper handwashing, if you have a choice wash your hands.
8. By edict of Dr. Rachel Levine, Pennsylvania Secretary of Health, a mask must be used when outside your home. (Not clinically proven, but recommended by a panel of experts)
 - a. **Watch a reliable video and learn how to correctly apply, wear, remove and, as necessary, clean the mask.** This is your responsibility!
 - b. If your mask is disposable, learn how to correctly dispose it. This is your responsibility!

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- c. All masks must be frequently changed, every 2 hours with continuous use.
9. By edict of Dr. Rachel Levine, Pennsylvania Secretary of Health, distancing of at least 6 feet must be observed. (Not clinically proven but recommended by a panel of experts)

Taking the science and realistically applying it, this is how we are implementing everything including the edicts:

1. The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass will be celebrated according to the *Missale Romanum* or the *Roman Missal*.
2. **Bishop Zubik's dispensation of the Sunday attendance remains in effect.** Nonetheless, there are plenty of online and on the television Masses, which fulfills the spirit of the dispensation.
 - a. If you would like to attend Mass, and are available to attend a weekday Mass, please consider doing so leaving room for those who can only attend on Sunday.
3. If you have been recently exposed to a person with COVID-19 or are not feeling well or are ill, stay home, do not come to Mass.
4. Wash your hands before leaving your house. **WASH YOUR HANDS BEFORE LEAVING YOUR HOUSE!!!**
5. Use hand sanitizer provided by OLOL Parish.
6. Follow government edicts.
7. Except for families, please maintain 6 feet social distancing as outlined on the pews.
8. **THE RECEPTION OF HOLY COMMUNION** (Keeping ALL this above in mind.)
 - a. This is setup to maintain the absolute dignity of the Blessed Sacrament and maintain reasonable, not extreme, health precautions.
 - b. Maintain 6 feet distancing.
 - c. Can be received in the hand or on the tongue (remember aerosolized droplets). Some priests may not feel comfortable, please be respectful.
 - d. Remove your mask just before the hand sanitizing station.
 - e. Sanitize your hands.
 - f. Receive the Body of Christ and self-communicate to the side.
 - g. Replace the mask.

In the meantime, we are, with precautions, starting to do baptisms, weddings, First Holy Communions, Confirmations, RCIA reception, etc. Please be patient as we open up!

Finally, let's get the uncomfortable stuff out of the way. One important area is that this is a Church. There are no enforcement individuals, police, etc. No one will be verbally/physically intimidated, bordering on assault, or touch/grab someone, battery. Additionally, I do not respond to indirect passive aggressive behavior; "Jim, someone called me" or an unsigned letter or an anonymous. I'll respectfully listen to the person only if I know the "someone". I immediately shred letters or delete emails which are unsigned and unverifiable.

Again, we must start to live with this virus. The virus is highly contagious but for the clear majority of the population not deadly. I trust we will live out our faith and prove to be a shining example of Christ's love in West Deer and surrounding communities. As always, please feel free to call or make an appointment to visit.

God bless,
Fr. Jim