



Office of the Vicar General

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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Last week, Bishop Zielinski modified the dispensation from Sunday Mass attendance, limiting the dispensation to those who fall into the “high risk” category according to the CDC. At the same time, Alaska began to see a significant increase in the number of individuals testing positive for COVID-19. I realize that this may be a cause for concern for those who are not at high risk but still worry about exposure to the virus. I would ask that you use prudential judgement in making the decision whether or not to attend Mass, but not to let fear be a driving force in that decision. The virus is in our community and we must learn to live with it in our midst.

The diocese continues to monitor the daily numbers as well as the recommendations of medical professionals as circumstances evolve. We believe that, at this time, we have adequate safeguards in place in our parishes to minimize COVID-19 exposure by asking parishioners to wear masks while attending Mass, maintaining social distancing and sanitizing after gatherings. However, given the recent increase in cases, we are asking parishes which are holding Mass indoors to ***suspend all singing during Mass until further notice***. Singing increases the risk of exposure to COVID-19. Rather, parishes are encouraged to speak the Mass parts and to include the Entrance and Communion antiphons.

In addition, we would ask that pastors reiterate from the pulpit the recommended guidelines for COVID-19 mitigation in our parishes, re-double efforts to make sure high touch surfaces are being sanitized regularly and to encourage staff and parishioners to stay home if they are exhibiting any signs or symptoms of illness. We will continue to monitor the situation and pass on recommendations and policy changes as needed.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation in helping to keep our parishioners safe and our churches open. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely in Christ,

Fr. Robert Fath, JCL
Vicar General