

ST. JOSEPH PARISH AND SCHOOL – SEPTEMBER 20, 2020

Dear Parishioners and Families,

Allow me to address the posture of St. Joseph Community relative to the COVID 19 concerns. COVID 19 is a medical and scientific issue. Unfortunately, this distressing virus has become a political weapon further interfering with the health of our people. As the Administrator of this parish/school and a member of the scientific community, I will focus on the advice from medical professionals and scientists.

Our sources determining our actions are these: Brian Cain, M.D., a member of our parish, Dennis McCluskey, M.D., also a registered parish member, Mark Arrendondo, M.D., Medical Director of Portage County Health District, the medical leadership of the CDC/NIAID, and the medical leadership advising our governor.

St. Joseph School opened without problems 2 weeks ago. The faculty, staff, and students are cooperating fully. Distances are maintained and the outdoors heavily used for teaching.

For our students we follow the following directives for the Portage County District. A student will be sent home if they have one or both of the following symptoms (**cough** or **shortness of breath**), and at least two of the following: fever (>100.4), chills, headache, muscle and/or joint pains, nausea and/or vomiting, sore throat, new loss of taste/or smell, or diarrhea. Parents are advised to consult their health care provider.

We have not sent a student home with these symptoms. Our COVID Protocol if these symptoms develop have been sent home to parents and how we would follow up at our school. In addition, if any teacher or staff had similar symptoms, we will test them at the school utilizing the student nurse and an antibody test supplied to us by Dr. McCluskey. It gives you an answer within 15 minutes.

Church attendance is increasing especially with our Saturday 7:00 pm Mass. Last week we had approximately 350 people spread all over our Grotto area. Our two Sunday Masses are averaging 60 to 65 persons spaced throughout the church. We also have an increased number of people coming to our daily Masses at 8:00 am or Wednesday at 6:00 pm. The church allows distance seating easily.

Our school population for in-school has risen about 10% from last year. We also have about 9 additional students doing home schooling but with a religious element that we supply to them. I certainly thank Brian Cain, M.D. and Dennis McCluskey M.D. for their continued assistance as we address this medical problem.

I am pleased that Dr. Brian Cain has moved his office back to our area. He is accepting new patients and his address and phone number are: 754 S. Cleveland Ave., Suite 300 – phone is 330-877-3008. My understanding at this time is that he can give a COVID test with results in about 15 minutes. It tests for the antibodies triggered by the COVID infection.

I sincerely regret that the political atmosphere of today impugns the medical and scientific professionalism of dedicated and skilled individuals. I have am especially thankful for Anthony Fauci, M.D. and his service under six presidents.

Fr. Tom Acker, S.J.
September 20, 2020