

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I wanted to update you on a few matters regarding ongoing changes in practices and protocols at Mass in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic. While I had intended to resume some pre-pandemic practices this upcoming weekend, I have determined that now is not yet the time to do so. Therefore, we will not yet resume the distribution of the Precious Blood at Mass, gift bearers, or the exchange of the sign of peace at Mass. I will reinstate these things once I have determined both that we are prepared to do so and that it is safe to do so. As an added precaution, myself and those parishioners who will be functioning as extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion will be resuming the practice of wearing a mask while distributing Holy Communion at Mass for the time being.

As the spread of the Delta variant of COVID-19 continues to headline the news, I ask that we please be sensitive to one another and take reasonable precautions to keep one another safe. Please remember that the Center for Disease Control continues to strongly urge that non-vaccinated people wear masks when indoors, and consider receiving the COVID-19 vaccination both for their own health as well as the health and well-being of others. Indeed, just today Bishop Felton sent a message to the priests of our diocese, strongly encouraging all of us priests of our diocese to receive vaccination.

As we may have also heard, just this week the CDC has recommended that even fully vaccinated people resume wearing masks in areas that are hot-spots for the spread of the Delta variant, and in K-12 schools. Some of us may be wondering what that means for us Catholics here on the North Shore. At this time, I am seeking the input of medical professionals and awaiting further guidance that may be coming from the Diocese.

I ask that we please be patient, and continue to pray for the sick, not just in this country, but especially in other countries such as Indonesia and India, where the healthcare structure is not as robust as ours, and people are suffering severely from the spread of COVID-19. I also ask for prayers for our medical and health care staff who continue to serve the needs of the sick and dying. And I ask all of you, my dear parishioners, to please do everything that we can to preserve unity even in the midst of this challenge. I am fully aware that topics such as masking, vaccination, COVID-19 protocols and the like have sadly become matters of intense divisions between people of differing opinions in our culture. That is why, for the sake of unity, I ask that we all be committed to following the guidance offered to us by our religious superiors as an act of humble obedience and faith, trusting that God the Holy Spirit will lead our Bishop and diocesan leaders to act with prudence and truth, keeping our best interests, both physical and spiritual in mind.

I thank you for your continued patience and the beautiful example of faith that you continue to offer through your attendance at Holy Mass and your prayerful spirit. Please pray for me as I pray for you!

In Christ our Lord,

Fr. Steve