

***The gradual re-opening of society is underway, and our parish is taking its part as well.*** Many people have asked when and how that will take place for us at Assumption, and I am happy to report that a few steps will be taken next week. We will return to having the church building open on Wednesdays until noon for those who wish to stop in for a visit and prayer before the Blessed Sacrament. This is not to encourage large gatherings (more than 10), but simply to begin a return to prayer and worship opportunities. Hand sanitizers and disinfecting wipes will continue to be in place in the church and everyone who comes should use them for the protection of others. Beginning next week, I will hear confessions from 10:00 a.m. to noon on Wednesdays, and again on Saturday afternoons from 4:00 to 5:00 p.m. There will be some significant changes for the form of celebration: **until further notice, the confessionals will not be in use.** I am asking that the norms of social distancing be maintained (6 feet) between penitents (unless they are in the same family), and entrance will be from the emergency exit door on the side nearest the office—on the side of Stations VIII through XIII—it will be clearly marked. Individuals will come down the far aisle of the church and I will be seated in the small area between the main body of the church and the back chapel; there will be some sort of screen in place between the confessor and penitent. When the sacrament has been completed, the fire exit next to the door may be used. This is to comply with the guidelines recommended to ensure social distancing, good airflow, privacy for the penitent, confidentiality for the sacrament and ease of movement. I realize that this is not the ideal by any stretch of the imagination, but it does give us the opportunity to return to celebration of the sacrament of penance.

At this time, the Bishop is encouraging compliance with Governor Inslee's instructions for the gradual re-opening of worship celebrations. The statement that some form of "drive-in worship services," that many of you have commented on does not include distribution of communion. As some of you know, I am just now completing a period of self-quarantine following the celebration of the anointing of the sick of coronavirus patients at the V.A. facility last week. The most important thing, as I have said since the beginning of this challenge, is to ensure the safety of others and that I do not become a vehicle for the contamination to a vulnerable population. By the time that we begin these first steps, that time of self-quarantine will have passed.

Please remember that all our precautions are not about "catching" the coronavirus, but about protecting others who may be vulnerable. I continue to see people out and about ignoring social distancing, refusing to wear face masks and following social distancing recommendations. I continue to encourage you to remember that you hold the safety and the lives of others in your hands.