

Dear Partnering Parishioners,

Our Lord speaks of His own passion and death in the Gospel this Sunday. Like Peter, we might say, "God forbid, Lord!" But Our Lord rebukes Peter for "thinking not as God does, but as human beings do." (Matthew 16: 22-23)

During this pandemic, it is hard for us to understand God's ways and to think as God does as we deal with the anxiety and fear of the COVID-19 virus and its implications for us as individuals, family, and society. I met a parishioner in the Pharmacy. We chatted a little while wearing our masks and keeping the proper social distance. She admitted she was afraid because of health issues and that is why she takes part in Holy Mass through the live-streaming. We need to be aware of our health issues and if someone is sick, they should take home and view the Mass via live-streaming or through outlets like EWTN.

Conversely, evidence suggests that Churches following public health guidelines do not present a greater risk of spreading the coronavirus than other similar activities. This statement was made by three members of the Thomas Institute Working Group on Infectious Disease Protocols for Sacraments & Pastoral Care. Doctor Thomas McGovern, Doctor Deacon Timothy Flanagan, and Doctor Paul Cieslak authored an article for Real Clear Science on Mass attendance and COVID-19. In the article they stated, "For Catholic churches following the guidelines, no outbreaks of COVID-19 have been linked to church attendance, even though we have examples...of asymptomatic, unknowingly infected individuals attending Mass and other parish functions," they wrote. "Their attendance could have led to an outbreak if appropriate precautions were not followed, yet in each case, we found no evidence of viral transmission." Furthermore, the doctors stated, "This encouraging news should inspire confidence that guidelines in place-based on CDC recommendations- are working to decrease COVID-19 transmission. While nothing during a pandemic is risk-free, these guidelines mean that Catholics (and public officials) may be confident that it's reasonably safe to come to Church for Mass and the sacraments."

The doctors wrote, "To date, the evidence does not suggest that Church attendance-following the current guidelines- is any more risky than shopping for groceries. And the spiritual good for believers in coming to Church is immeasurably important for their well-being. Indeed, for Catholics, Mass and above all the Eucharist are central to the Christian life. In a time like this, it is even more important that the faithful be able to come to Church and receive Holy Communion. "

I can assure you that we are following the recommended guidelines at each of our churches after each Mass or service. In your name, I wish to thank our staff and volunteers who are doing so much to ensure that our Churches are cleaned and sanitized for everyone's health and safety.

I invite you, if you are healthy and well, to consider coming back to the in-person celebration of Holy Mass on Sundays and weekdays, for Funeral Masses, the celebration of Holy Matrimony and Baptisms, for the celebration of the Sacrament of Penance, for Holy Hours and coming before the Lord present in the Most Blessed Sacrament in the Tabernacle. For those who are compromised with health issues, please continue to view the live-stream Masses that are offered here and through the Archdiocese. If you have any questions, concerns, or would like to talk things over, I am happy to speak with you or visit you. Yes, wearing my masks, using a hand sanitizer and keeping the proper social distance.

As this Sunday's psalm, Psalm 63 prays: "You are my help, and in the shadow of your wings I shout for joy. My souls clings fast to you; your right hand upholds me." May the Lord bless and protect you!

*Monsignor George A. Majoros, Pastor*