



Dear Friends,

I'm sure you've all heard by now that we can move to open the parish church. I'm sure many of you are looking forward to that day. I feel I must let you know 1.) what we have to do before we can open and 2.) what we are allowed to do once we get permission to open. Let me say right up front that opening the church does NOT mean holding Mass in the church and the number of people allowed inside the church is severely limited. I don't want you to have a false impression of what's been permitted.

Let me explain. The coronavirus still circulates throughout the population and can be as deadly as ever. That said, we have to try to make the church as safe as possible, knowing that upwards of 30% of the population are carriers of the virus *and don't know it themselves*. One of these people could be in the church at any time and no one, including that person, would be aware the virus is present. *There is no way to make the church 100% safe*. The bishops of Illinois have set up requirements based on the State of Illinois guidelines.

The requirements we must follow are as follows:

1. only ONE of the two parish worship sites can be opened & must be thoroughly disinfected first.
I've chosen to open St. Barbara because it is smaller and will require less work to keep disinfected and cost us less in supplies
2. only **10 people** are allowed in the church at any one time
3. all *must wear masks at all times*
4. use hand sanitizers
5. keep social distance of 6 feet from others
immediate family members may sit together with 6 feet separating them from others
6. right now, the ONLY services allowed are Baptism, Weddings, Funerals and Reconciliations
7. the names of attendees will be requested. That way should some attendee comes down with the virus, we would then be able to inform all who were present that they should quarantine themselves for 14 days or consult their doctor.

To organize the disinfection of our church, we need 3 teams of volunteers.

1. we need 3 "Captains"
 1. under 65 years old
 2. no pulmonary medical conditions, including asthma
 3. trained via on-line video (1 hr.)
 4. capable of leading a group in problem solving
 5. have the time to do what's needed
2. we need volunteers to make up 3 Teams: Set-up; Greeters; Clean-up

I have been given a check list of what must be accomplished which I have to sign and send to the Pastoral Center who will then send permission to open.

As you can see this will take time to get the Captains trained and teams formed before any work can be begin. I CALL UPON ALL PARISHIONERS TO STEP UP TO THIS CHALLENGE. The sooner we have the teams formed and supplied, the sooner we can open.

I realize the requirements are many and complex. I also realize they may not accomplish what they set out to do. There is no perfect system; there is no 100% protection. Coming into the church even after it has been scrubbed down requires everyone to take a risk. We cannot guarantee total protection from this virus. Sad to say and hard to hear, coming to church will be taking the same risk as going to the grocery store. There are no guarantees.

We've heard the term "new normal" used to help us expect changes in the way we live. "New normal" applies to church as well. We remain far away from returning to the way we did things in church back in March. Perhaps the Holy Spirit is using the coronavirus to teach us a lesson. Scripture, especially in the Old Testament, shows that God has used historical events and Nature to teach his people. Perhaps this is our lesson to reflect on how the sacraments touch our lives, how much we depend on them and how we can only celebrate them when we are together. It's worth thinking about. Right now, it's time to get to work.

Fr. Denis