

Sept. 28, 2020

Dear Fellow Disciples,

We have been through a lot this year as a country and as parish family. I do not claim to know what the future holds, but I do trust Divine Providence and the need to follow the Lord's will. Many of our flock have scattered in recent months...but now it is time to return to the Shepherd's fold.

I trust that you have received Bishop Gruss' letter regarding the reinstatement of the Mass obligation, beginning October 1st. These were mailed to all registered parishioners two weeks ago. The letter may also be read at:

<https://saginaw.org/latest-diocesan-updates-related-to-coronavirus>

In his letter, Bishop is clear regarding the need to return to Mass, writing: *"Many Catholics daily engage in other activities outside of the home that present similar or greater risks of contamination such as eating at restaurants, traveling, non-essential shopping, etc. With our current protocols, our churches are among the safest places to be in contrast to other public spaces....Being incorporated into Christ's Body through Baptism, attending Mass (when not dispensed) on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation allows us to share in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ offered to the Father. The Church calls us to worship God in this profound way because the Eucharistic liturgy is the work of Christ in which we are privileged to participate."*

However, Bishop is also clear that exceptions may be made for just cause: *"...I continue to encourage all people who are sick in any way, who are fearful of contracting COVID-19 or have concerns about*

*underlying health issues and may be vulnerable to the disease to remain home. It would not be a sin to do so."*

According to the State's latest executive order and Bishop Gruss, we are no longer limited to 25% of building capacity. Nevertheless, safety remains a top priority and we will continue to practice physical distancing, wearing face-masks, and frequent cleaning/sanitizing.

At Sacred Heart, we will continue to offer the 8:30 Sunday Mass in the parking lot for a little while longer. At these Masses, everyone remains in their cars except during communion. St. Athanasius parishioners are of course welcome.

Starting this weekend, we will also be restoring the distribution of Holy Communion to its proper place, i.e., before the Final Blessing. The other modifications that we have made at Mass since May will remain unchanged.

Two outreach services that were offered in recent months are now being put on indefinite hiatus. They can, of course, be reactivated in the future if necessary:

1. Almost every parish Mass since Palm Sunday was put on YouTube. With the reinstatement of the Sunday obligation, those videos will no longer be produced because – frankly – I do not want anyone to think that praying along with a video equates to actually assisting at Mass. (Videos of special events and related programming will still be uploaded, however.) The homebound still have plenty of options for daily Mass on TV and internet, such as EWTN and from the cathedral at <https://saginaw.org/cathedral-live>
2. After making three rounds of phone calls to every registered parishioner for whom we have a working number, the Gladwin-

Harrison Good Samaritans are also going dormant. Thank you to all who volunteered in this worthy program.

If you've been away for some time, now is the time to return to the sacraments and your spiritual home. As I said at the top, I do not know what the future holds, but I do know that the family that prays together stays together. I hope to see you this weekend!

In Christ,  
Fr. J. Marcel Portelli