

Please wear a mask!

Once again the virus has raised its head in our country. What is very different for us is that this time it is here in Ionia. In the past, we would read in the paper that it was in New York, Detroit, Los Angeles. This time it is here. Not someplace else. Here. In our neighborhood. Our hospital here is at 90% capacity. It is our neighbors and our friends who are getting sick and dying. So what are we going to do?

First, we need to tighten up on our commitment, reluctant or not, to wear a mask. This means here at church as well. For some this is nothing new. For others, it is. But for the sake of others, as well as ourselves, let's do this. Second, we are reinforcing and sometimes changing some of the things we have been doing here at Mass. When we come up for Holy Communion, we have been removing our mask just before receiving the most Precious Body and Blood of Christ. For those receiving on the tongue, nothing has changed. For those receiving in the hand, please now receive with your mask on. Then step to the side, receive it, and return to your seat. Another area is a friendly reminder that we are not to exchange a sign of peace. You will notice that neither the deacon nor I ask anyone to share the sign of peace. Please don't offer to do it. We still have no servers, no ushers, no bringing up of the bread and wine, no distribution of the Precious Blood. I really hope we will return to these!

As you know, we have also backed off on other items. There are, for now, no parish or school meetings. No prayer or discussion groups. No music ministry rehearsals. Faith Formation is suspended for the rest of 2020. No rentals of the parish hall.

Another new item is the adding of an evening Mass during the week. We have been nearing (and in some cases over) our Mass attendance limits for the 4:00 p.m. Saturday Mass at SS. Peter & Paul and the 9:45 a.m. Sunday Mass at St. Ed's. Please consider going on a **weekday in place of Saturday or Sunday**. I have added a 6:00 p.m. Mass on Monday at Lake Odessa and a 6:00 pm Mass on Tuesday in Ionia. Also, as you know, our bishop has extended the dispensation from the obligation of attending Sunday Mass until January 4, 2021.

In all of these, wearing a mask is, in my humble opinion, the most important. We all know that you can't walk into Menards without a mask. Let us be at least that attentive to details here in our parish. Here we are called to love God with all our heart, soul, and mind...and to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. Out of our love for neighbor, let us wear a mask.

Thank you. And may God bless you as we go through these trying times.

Fr. Tom