

Dear Parishioners,

The Diocese of Columbus has recently offered some guidance to pastors regarding the continuing return to public worship as we continue to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. None of us will forget the "shutdown" last March, April and May, when all of our churches were closed, and public Masses were not celebrated. On Pentecost Sunday, we began a very cautious return to public Masses, even while a general dispensation from the Sunday obligation was granted to all Catholics. Since that initial reopening, some parishioners have eagerly returned to Sunday Mass. Our attendance here at St. Andrew's has been approximately one-third of what it was before the shutdown. Attendance at weekday masses has been very good. And many parishioners, especially those who are more vulnerable because of age or health conditions, are prudently staying home and avoiding gathering with others. Perhaps they connect with the worshipping community via a broadcast or livestream Mass. The guidance from **the Diocese suggests that we should consider the first phase of the return to public worship to be over, and now we should be cautiously moving into a new phase in which we will take some more small steps toward normalcy,** even as we continue to take careful precautions for the health and safety of all those coming to church.

I want to make it clear that **the dispensation from the Sunday Mass obligation has been extended indefinitely.** All Catholics in the Diocese of Columbus and throughout Ohio are excused from this obligation. However, **if you are healthy, and are not experiencing any symptoms of illness, and are not in a "high risk" category, you are at this time encouraged to come to Mass.** Those who are in a high-risk category or are not feeling well are encouraged to stay home. Those who come to church will be expected to wear a mask, to observe social distancing, and follow all of the safety protocols that have been established.

Also, it is now possible, with appropriate precautions, to bring Holy Communion to the homebound, and to offer the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick to those who need and request it. I would note, however, that pastoral visits to those in the hospital or nursing homes remains very restricted.

We are also permitted and encouraged to resume some form of Eucharistic Adoration in the parishes. **Here at St. Andrew, we will resume our Tuesday evening Exposition of the Most Blessed Sacrament beginning Tuesday, Sept. 8 at 6 p.m., and concluding with Compline and Benediction at 8:45 p.m.** I hope that these small steps which we are taking with the guidance coming from the Diocese, will bring us all a bit closer to "normal." May God bless you all and keep you safe and healthy!

Your Pastor,
Msgr. Stephan Moloney