

# OUR RESPONSE TO COVID-19

For over a year, our world has been confronted by and trying to deal with the COVID-19 virus pandemic. Even though we are trying to cope with the 'fatigue' produced by the prolong conditions of this threat to our health and well being, we are hopeful that an end to all of its serious effects is lessening as time goes by with our personal efforts and given the numbers of those receiving a vaccine are increasing daily. As we also see the numbers of our parishioners attending in-church Masses and events increasing, we want to commend you about the precautions that are being taken and continue to be taken so that as many are returning to worship and praise the Lord in community and in-person will do so safely during this Lenten and upcoming Easter Seasons.

+ When our parishioners are sick, we stay home and seek medical attention, if necessary. The common signs of a Coronavirus infection similar to other illnesses including the flu and bad cold include respiratory symptoms, particularly careful during this time. When we have these symptoms, we stay home and we contact our healthcare provider, urgent care or, if serious, the Emergency Department.

+ Next, our parishioners observe the health department and our diocesan recommended precautions. We do this both for our own well-being, ourselves, as well as the health of others. We regard the actions we take to prevent the illness as a Christian sacrifice to help others including your family, friends and those that are "neighbors" among us.

These precautions include:

- ◆ **SOCIAL DISTANCING:** We maintain a distance of at least 6 feet away from others (outside of our family whom we live with) for our interactions going to designated pews with the guidance of ushers. The CDC says that short (less than 15 minute) periods at a shorter distance are probably safe, but whenever possible we need to remain at a safe distance.
- ◆ **HAND WASHING:** All of us encourage each other to wash our hands properly whenever possible or to use hand sanitizer as plenty are available in our churches. Also, we have provided spray sanitizer within the bathrooms so you can spray the parts of the bathroom including faucet and door handles that you have used before you leave.
- ◆ **SNEEZE OR COUGH:** We are reminded that if we sneeze or cough, to do so in our elbows or cover our mouth/nose with a cloth or tissue and dispose of these tissues properly.
- ◆ **WE WEAR MASKS:** While there are many opinions about the effectiveness of masks, the evidence is clear that they work in reducing the spread of viral and bacterial particles; but, they are not 100% effective.

It's not a fear response.

It's a faith response.

In order for masks to be most effective in their use, at our linked parish communities, we practice the following guidelines:

- ◆ We wear masks in any building on the campus (Church, Rectory, Parish Centers). When inside, we wear masks and have them readily available.
- ◆ If you work in an office, you may keep your mask off, but have them readily available. If someone comes in, put your mask on immediately and insure they have a mask on, also.
- ◆ If you or a visitor need a mask, we have them available in church or in the office. See an usher or office personnel.
- ◆ If a delivery person comes into our offices, we put our masks on and we ask them to put theirs on.
- ◆ Our maintenance staff and the church building cleaners from Intandem wear masks as they enter into the buildings. And, if they are working alone in a specific area, they may remove their masks to improve their breathing. However, if a person enters into their work area, they place their masks on immediately.
- ◆ All clergy and ministers wear masks when in close proximity to others and properly use hand sanitizers when handling the sacred vessels and before and after they distribute Communion and when standing near others and leaving the altar.
- ◆ Two ambo's (pulpit, lectern) are used to reduce the need for continuous sanitizing of them while the ministers and clergy proclaim the Word and keep ministers and clergy safe from exposure.

+ **THANK YOU** . . . to all who attend our Masses and other worship and devotional events in our church and are faithfully following the restrictive guidelines required to combat the Covonavirus so we can keep each other safe. You have been amazing in your flexibility and response. Our effectiveness and success in remaining safe and our overall response to special circumstances including how to prepare and support others during funerals have been seen as helpful.

+ **THANK YOU** . . . to those of you who have been unable to attend worship liturgies and activities in-person but join us online. And for those of you without internet but are in need of prayers and materials to keep you connected to the community and engaged deeply with Our Lord. Our bulletins and information can be sent to you. Please contact our pastoral assistant, Sr. Regina Gertrude Aman at (716) 372-4841 ext. 17 or our office staff and let us know your needs.

+ **THANK YOU** . . . to all for the support of our parish and each other and your flexibility. Although our plans and your responses to the epidemic have been effective to date, protective plans are needed and are now being made for Easter. We are able to accommodate both in-person attendance and have increased our LIVE-stream capabilities. Please look for a correspondence from us soon that will include our Holy Week and Easter Schedule. Reservations for Holy Week Masses and services are still needed and you will be provided with guidelines. We look forward to seeing you and your family when you are able to attend. Please check the parish website or contact the office staff if you lack online capability to receive updates.

+ **\*\*IMPORTANT NOTE: AND, THANK YOU** . . . for your understanding and encouragement during these unusual and challenging times. Please know that your safety and security are of our utmost concern as we worship our Lord together. We have been commended by our Diocesan leadership and community health care personnel on how we have all been responding to keep us all and our visitors safe with caring and concern. During this time of Hope, Renewal and Peace, we ask the Lord to help us feel His presence, His love and His joy in a gracious and abundant way.