

Dear Parishioners:

Our Lord tells us in this Sunday's gospel reading from Matthew: "Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for yourselves. For my yoke is easy, and my burden light" (Mt 11:28-30). These words of comfort and relief are what we want - or need - to hear when we are burdened by problems or concerns that become difficult to manage, such as many are experiencing in the midst of this Coronavirus pandemic. At the same time, Paul reminds us in his letter to the Galatians that we must also help others with their burdens, "and in this way," he explains, "fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal 6:2). In doing so he reminds us on this Independence Day weekend, just as he first instructed the Galatian Christians, that the true freedom to which Christ calls us is not to be used as a pretext for selfishness, but for service to others out of genuine love, care, and compassion. "For the whole law (of Christ) is summed up in a single commandment: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'" (5:13-14; also Mt 22:34-40; Mk 12:28-34; Lk 10:25-37).

As the number of positive cases of Coronavirus continues to spike to record levels in our state, with the heaviest concentration here in South Florida, as well as a number of other states, we realize that the guidelines that have been in place to help impede the spread of the virus will remain in effect, and for some time to come. Hopefully, as Christians we are able to see the restrictions required by these guidelines, especially the wearing of facemasks, as less of a burden on ourselves and more of a way of relieving the burden on others. As a reminder from my last message a month ago, these restrictions and other measures include:

- Social distancing of approximately six feet (except those of the same household) when entering and leaving the church (on the east and west sides only), and in church as well. To help maintain this distance in church, certain rows of pews are blocked off and blue tape markings have been placed on the pews and the floor. Please respect them. Families may wish to occupy the pews in the east and west transepts which are spaced at greater distance (since the rows are smaller) than the pews in the main transept.
- Facemasks that cover one's nose and mouth are to be worn and removed only to consume the communion host. While communion in the hand is preferable for health reasons (just as one would not want anyone else's hand near one's mouth or touching one's tongue), communion on the tongue is permitted but only from the priest in the center aisle, who has extra sanitizing material. Gloves are not to be worn for the distribution or reception of communion.
- Hymnals, missalettes, and other material will remain emptied from the pews and tables by the doors, holy water fonts will remain empty, wall-mounted hand sanitizers are by the east and west doors of the church, and the church will continue be sanitized between Masses
- Avoid physical contact such as hand shaking, holding hands, or embracing.
- The dispensation from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass continues indefinitely, so please keep this mind when deciding whether or not to attend Mass in church or watch it home online. In fact, watching it home online may be the most Christian thing to do for yourself and/or others if you are at high risk of infection, not feeling well, or uncomfortable with the risk that Mass attendance may involve for you.

Happy July 4th holiday, and thank you all again for continuing to follow these safety guidelines, for in doing so you demonstrate our true freedom as Christians to "bear one another's burdens, and so... fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal 6:2).

Fr. Steve