



Office of the Bishop

Our Continuing Battle with COVID-19

10 December 2020

Dear Pastors & Parishioners

Greetings in the Lord!

As of Monday, December 7th, new orders issued from the Provincial Health Officer maintain the suspension of indoor gatherings until January 8, 2021. Regrettably, this means that we will not be able to gather as usual for Christmas Mass. However:

- If possible, consider offering an outdoor Mass in your parking lot, maximum 50 vehicles (according to Public Health, this is permissible). Do not set up speakers outside that will disturb the neighbours and give rise to complaints
- If not possible, parishioners can still come in their cars to receive Holy Communion after attending a televised or virtual Mass

In order to safely provide Holy Communion to parishioners outside in their cars, please adhere to the following instructions:

- If space permits:
 - vehicles should leave a parking space between themselves to effectively social distance as car windows could be open
 - a maximum of 50 vehicles are allowed in the parking lot
- People are to remain in their vehicles and not exit their vehicles
- Masks should be worn by the people in their cars if the windows are open, except when they consume the Blessed Sacrament
- Priests are to wear a mask for the distribution of Holy Communion
- Priests' hands should be sanitized before distributing Holy Communion and parishioners' hands before receiving Holy Communion
- In order to maintain the social distancing, both the priest and the people should fully extend their arms at Communion time. Priests are not to lean into the open car window to give Holy Communion
- A server, wearing a mask and maintaining social distancing, could accompany the priest with hand sanitizer in case of hand contamination while distributing Communion

- Because of the snow and cold temperatures:
 - Gloves may be needed by the priest. Gloves that expose only the fingertips are recommended as they will keep the hands warm, but allow you to pickup the host with your fingers
 - For large accumulations of snow, or parking lot inaccessibility, or the danger of falling because of ice, consider distributing Holy Communion at the curbside of the parish. Have people line up in their cars and drive up to the priest for Communion
 - Please cover the ciborium with your hand if it is snowing
 - Consider using hand warmers if the temperature gets very cold
 - Priests do not need to be vested to distribute Holy Communion. They may use a stole over their coat if they wish
- Every parish's Mass times should be published in the deanery, whether live-streamed or drive-in, so that all parishioners are aware of the availability of Masses outside of their own parish
- Please refer to my previous memo concerning confessions and reconciliation

After not being able to celebrate Easter, many of us were hoping and praying that we would be able to gather in person with our Faith communities, and celebrate Christmas as we have always done. This is not the case this year.

Thus, we all need to make the best of an unfortunate situation knowing that our Lord understands our predicament and is with us in our struggles and sufferings. If we have learned anything during this pandemic, it is that there is only one person we can count on. His name is Jesus. He is *"my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer, my God, my rock in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold."* (Ps 18.2)

Everyone has made heroic sacrifices during this time, and I am heartened by the resilience and commitment of all of the clergy and Catholic faithful. Well done! Keep up your good work for a little while longer.

Please continue your prayers for an end to the pandemic and the suffering and death that has come with it.

May Our Lady of Monte Berico continue to protect us and accompany us during this pandemic.

God bless you.

Sincerely in Christ our Lord,



✠ Gregory J Bittman
Bishop of Nelson