

**Dear St. Elizabeth Seton Parishioner:**

I understand that we are all losing patience with the Coronavirus Pandemic. I find myself praying and wishing that the virus would mutate itself out of existence like the flu epidemic of 1918, and we would be done with it. But my gut tells me that it's likely this fall will see a resurgence of the virus and many new infections. Then again, I wish I could point to a dependable study, but for every study that claims one thing, there is another study that claims the opposite. Doctors and nurses tell me the virus remains a mystery, even now.

As your pastor and as your friend, I want you to know that I believe we ought to be abundantly cautious until science catches up and we fully understand the virus and know how to address the sickness.

I know some will not welcome this news. I actually appreciate their courage and daring. But this is not about "us" or "me" it is about our brothers and sisters. After all, we proclaim the sacredness of human life, we ought to protect the life in the pews next to us. Many are afraid attending Mass might expose them to the virus and are forced to stay away. I am also very much concerned about our two senior associates. Both have been told by doctors to protect themselves from the virus.

I visited the website for the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and pulled off the basic and most recent information available. The CDC recommends:

"Older adults and people who have severe underlying medical conditions like heart or lung disease or diabetes seem to be at higher risk for developing serious complications from COVID-19 illness." The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to this virus. The virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person, especially with people who are a-symptomatic. Wash your hands often; avoid close contact (closer than six feet); cover your mouth and nose with a mask in public settings; cover coughs and sneezes; and clean and disinfect. Monitor your health daily!

Without hesitation, I would add to the CDC list the importance of taking care of your mental health. Covid-fatigue is everywhere these days. I can see it in the faces of our parishioners and I hear it when listening to people talk. The isolation is the most difficult challenge. Be aware of your state of mind and take care of yourself.

**Changes for St. Elizabeth Seton Parish – Changes beginning September 1, 2020 in anticipation of the autumn flu season:**

*(Remember we are protecting the vulnerable from those who may be infected and are asymptomatic.)*

- We will refrain from "congregational singing" until medical professionals indicate we can resume normal liturgical practices. Our cantors and music directors will be free to chant and sing from the choir area.
- Mass parts which are usually chanted or sung, will be recited.
- We will ask members of the congregation to spray and wipe down their pews with sanitizer. (Paper towels will be provided for the first weekend, and we will ask parishioners to bring a towel from home for future Masses.)
- Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament will be moved to the Daily Mass Chapel (9 AM to Noon) to afford more adequate personal distancing.

For those who may be afraid or have comorbidities, you have been dispensed from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass until November 1, 2020. Please be aware the day remains sacred; prayer, reading Sacred Scripture, recitation of the Rosary, or watching the live-streamed Mass at Seton is recommended for your spiritual vitality.

Frankly, I do not enjoy these directives, any more than you do. But again, we are working to protect those who are most vulnerable. Happily, we still have access to the Eucharist, the life of a Catholic. As always, please feel free to contact me with any concerns or input.

Faternally,

Father Brian Doerr