

A Message from Bishop Zinkula  
April 28, 2020

We desperately want to get back to Sunday Mass, to First Communions and Confirmations, to weddings and funerals, to gather as parish communities and as a society. The SARS-COV-2 virus, which causes COVID-19, is very contagious. It has spread quickly and efficiently because no one is immune to it. The only clear way to get proven immunity is by using a vaccine that may be 12-18 months away. Meanwhile, the virus will continue to spread at different rates in different places, so there will continue to be restrictions and we will need to continue to take precautions.

However, eventually we will be able to begin to slowly relax the restrictions and precautions, which include physical distancing, wearing masks, self-quarantine or isolation in certain circumstances, travel restrictions, school and business closures, working from home and modifying our participation in the Mass. While the rate of infections and deaths decrease over time, we will need to watch for any return of the pandemic outbreak which will require us to reapply some precautions and restrictions.

During this adaptation to the pandemic, the number of people in the church building will need to be limited. We will need to reconsider how we celebrate Masses, Baptisms, First Communions, Confirmations, weddings, funerals, and ordinations with a smaller community to maintain physical distancing. Technology will continue to keep us connected with those who need to stay home.

Familiar practices, like receiving communion on the tongue for some people or from the chalice, will need to wait for now. Those most at risk—those who are older and have underlying health issues—will need to take extra precautions to stay safe, including perhaps not attending Mass.

Adjusting to this pandemic will take patience and hope as we navigate the best way to keep risks reasonably low.

“We have such need in these times that can appear dark, in which we sometimes feel disoriented by the evil and violence that surround us, by the distress of so many of our brothers and sisters. We need hope. We feel disoriented and even rather discouraged because we are powerless and it seems this darkness will never end. We must not let hope abandon us, because God, with his love, walks with us.” Pope Francis, *On Hope*.