

Dear Parishioners,

I have taken a break this summer from sending you weekly messages. It is not that I am not thinking about you or praying for you. Perhaps all the messaging I was doing during the pandemic finally caught up with me. In any case, I hope to return to weekly messages after Labor Day.

It has been a source of great happiness for me to see so many parishioners returning to Sunday Mass. The Church is built upon the foundation of Jesus' gift of himself in the Eucharist. There is no other substitute for the Eucharist in the life of the Church. It is the source of the Church's strength and unity.

It was a joy to be able to remove social distancing restrictions and make mask-wearing at Mass optional for the fully vaccinated at the beginning of July. It was a joy to be able to remove the plexiglass shield that had stood between the priest and those receiving Holy Communion since June 2020.

But now, because of the so-called delta variant, it appears that the possibility of spreading and contracting Covid-19 has become more acute. The District of Columbia is once again requiring people to wear a mask in indoor public settings whether they have been vaccinated or not. Governor Hogan has not imposed such a restriction for Maryland—yet.

I was fully vaccinated against Covid-19 last March. I got the vaccine as soon as I was able. It is a work of mercy to get vaccinated. It is the best way, on an earthly level, to contain the pandemic. My advice to all parishioners is to be get vaccinated unless your doctor advises you not to or you have a compelling moral objection not to get vaccinated.

I began removing my mask for the celebration of Mass--except when giving Holy Communion--a few weeks ago. But I have decided to put it on again for the entire Mass. It is a sacrifice, to be sure, but I think it wise until we have a better idea of just how serious the new variant of the virus is.

The pandemic has tested all of us on many levels. For some it has imposed almost crushing burdens. For others it has been little more than a minor nuisance. Most of us fall somewhere in between.

For all of us the pandemic has revealed both the strengths and weaknesses of our individual character as well as the character of our nation. We have seen expressions of both great generosity and great selfishness. Again, most of us in probably fall somewhere in between.

The pandemic—however long it will last—is a continual invitation for us as believers to draw closer to Jesus and discern how he would have us react. In his earthly ministry, Jesus looked upon the multitudes who came to him with great compassion. He spent himself to heal them and transform them by his love. In all matters he asks us to draw strength from him that we may follow his example.

Yours in Christ,

Fr. Walter