

Music Notes

Hasn't this been quite a time? What a challenge this pandemic has placed on all of us and on the way we have to do things. In an effort to keep our doors open and to keep you safe we have chosen to limit congregational singing. Why? This is a good time to answer some of the common questions being asked about music liturgy during the pandemic.

It is important to understand that each parish determines individually how best to keep their congregations safe. The Bishop's office determines things like the number of parishioners allowed in the sanctuary at a time (currently 25% capacity) and wearing masks during Mass just to name a few. Some things, mainly liturgical, are left to the discretion of each parish.

Answers to the questions below are based on what we have determined to be the safest practices in protecting our parish family from the spread of COVID19. We continue to look closely at the data and science upon which our decisions have been made.

Why haven't we started singing again at Mass when other parishes have?

Singing produces 30x more aerosol mass than speaking. Recent findings have been published saying that one person singing "quietly" produces the same amount of aerosol mass as one person speaking in a normal tone of voice. This, however, does not change the findings of the aerosol mass produced in communal singing in confined places. Congregations around the world have continued to ban singing at Mass based on the assumption that singing in confined places, with more than a few people, are not worth the risk of spreading the virus which would end in the reclosers. For this reason, we have made the decision to keep congregational singing limited to the Psalm Response and Alleluia during the Liturgy of the Word.

If we are wearing masks, why doesn't that make it safe to sing all parts of the Mass?

Although they help significantly in protecting us from spreading or inhaling Covid19 particles, not all masks are created equal. Many masks do not fit securely; some do very little in protection of any kind. For example, a bandana or a gator, or masks that are worn incorrectly under the nose allow the virus to seep in or out. The virus itself is spread by talking, sneezing, coughing and breathing. The CDC has reported that Covid19 lives in the air for up to three hours and on surfaces for up to three days. As seen by the number of infections and deaths around the world, it is a superspreading virus. Current restrictions by the state of Michigan allow only 10 people gathered in one place at a time while Diocesan guidelines are allowing up to 25% of its normal capacity to gather for weekend Masses. For us, that's 120-150 people gathered each weekend for three separate Mass times. Caledonia and Holy Family have been blessed to not see large numbers of infections although Kent county's numbers are currently the highest in the western side of the state. Continuing to keep our risk low is worth any small inconvenience.

If you have other questions you'd like us to address, please email them to music@holyfamilycaledonia. If questions come to us we will continue to answer them, a few at a time, here in the bulletin.

I'd like to conclude with a pastor's view from an article I've read recently. .Pastor Eric Geiger from California writes:

"May the holy frustration drive us to commit to never taking singing to God among God's people for granted. Perhaps this moment will be the moment God uses to birth in us a passionate commitment to soak in every second when we are able to gather again without restrictions".

That day will surely come. Until then, let's watch out and care for one another as best we can.