

July 30, 2021

Dear friends,

Happy summer! I hope you're getting out and about in this warm weather. For myself, this is the time of year to go swimming during the day and gather around a fire pit with friends in the evening. Whatever your preferred form of relaxation, may it be fruitful and frequent.

I am writing to you today to share the latest news and changes in response to COVID-19. This is prompted by the most recent chancery update – you can read it in its entirety and subscribe to future mailings using the link in the footnote below.<sup>1</sup>

### **The Delta variant of COVID-19**

As you may have heard, there is a virulent strain of the COVID-19 virus called the Delta variant. In Washington state it is predicted that as of July 19, about 92% of cases can be attributed to this variant.<sup>2</sup> In response, the CDC recommends wearing masks at indoor public gatherings – even for who are fully vaccinated – when in areas of substantial or high transmission (such as King & Snohomish counties).<sup>3,4</sup>

There are three key points I would like to emphasize with the Delta variant:

- **it is much more transmissible** – even those who are fully vaccinated can asymptotically pass it on and – though more rarely – contract it
- **it is more virulent** – the Delta variant hits harder than the original strain
- though 'breakthrough' infections are possible, **vaccinations are highly effective in protecting against variants (80%-90%), including Delta**

### **The takeaway for us**

Happily, we are not facing an immediate crisis. Washington state reached its initial goal of 70% vaccination on July 14<sup>th</sup> – it seems reasonable to hope that that number will continue to rise and cases will continue to fall. In the meantime, **the archbishop is encouraging – but not mandating – face masks at indoor Masses**. To model this, myself, Deacon Kirk, and all ministers at Mass will be wearing masks when not actively leading. While no one will be turned away for not wearing a mask at this time, please consider joining us in wearing masks at Sunday & weekday Masses.

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<sup>1</sup> COVID-19 Guidance [C2P], Archdiocese of Seattle, July 29, 2021, <https://mailchi.mp/seattlearch.org/prayer-card-about-virus-from-archbishop-1992387?e=0b72984380>

<sup>2</sup> News release: COVID-19 cases are increasing across the state, Washington State Department of Health, July 27, 2021, <https://www.doh.wa.gov/Newsroom/Articles/ID/2874/COVID-19-cases-are-increasing-across-the-state>

<sup>3</sup> Interim Public Health Recommendations for Fully Vaccinated People, CDC, July 27, 2021 <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated-guidance.html>

<sup>4</sup> COVID-19 Integrated County View, CDC, July 29, 2021, <https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#county-view>

### **Preparing for the future**

For things to continue on the positive trend that they've been going – and things have been going generally well! – I also want to encourage anyone who is able but has not yet done so to **take this opportunity to get vaccinated**. It is morally permissible, it is effective, and it makes all the difference in preventing further cases, protecting yourself and those around you. **Vaccination is the most effective means of protecting against COVID-19 and its variants.**

I'd also like to encourage you to take extra time to pray. Whether it in familiar devotionals, spontaneous expression, or simple quiet time, **we have an innate need to approach the Lord with our fears, frustrations, hopes, and desires**. One of my hopes is that this experience will help us build stronger relationships with each other, prioritize God more consciously, and confidently approach Jesus more often.

To that end, I want to make a particular invitation: **come to Mass!** Although the obligation to attend Mass is still dispensed, there is simply no substitute to being present before God in prayer & worship with His Church. Whether it is a Sunday Mass or a daily Mass, you'll be blessed for having taken the opportunity and we all will be blessed for the time we spend together after so long apart.

Especially after the long Lent of last year, weekends are the highlight of my week as a priest; I look forward to seeing you, praying with you at Mass, and catching up afterwards before you go home. I pray for you daily – please pray for me and for our entire community, that we may be drawn ever closer in Christ.

Sincerely,

Father Maurer