



## DIOCESE OF GREAT FALLS-BILLINGS OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

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October 27, 2020

Dear Sisters and Brothers in the Lord,

The primary role of a parish is to provide a local place in which Catholics can worship God at Mass and hopefully be fed spiritually through the sacraments, especially the Eucharist. For those who do desire to attend their local parish in-person for Mass, they should know that, as much as possible, it is a safe place to be. The primary concern for a parish community is the salvation of souls but this does not eliminate concern for their bodies as well. The Catholic Church has developed a health care system over the centuries as well as outreach to the poor and vulnerable because of concern for the physical well-being of people. It is why I have asked, as your bishop, to adhere to a set of protocols. I realize that not every person who comes to Mass can readily wear a mask due to an underlying health issue, e.g., asthma, COPD, etc. For those who cannot wear a mask, I would urge them to use the plastic shields that are available. It is a scientific fact that the wearing of masks and spatial distancing help prevent contagion of the coronavirus.

Not every person who tests positive actually becomes ill or exhibits symptoms. Some experience only mild symptoms and may not realize they have contracted the coronavirus. However, every person who does test positive for COVID-19 has the potential to spread the virus to other people, including family members, friends and members of the parish community, which is why public health officials continue to encourage everyone to wear a mask and maintain at least the recommended six feet of "social distance" when in public which includes the time they are at church for Mass.

I provide this as a simple reminder so that, as much as possible, we may continue to keep our parish churches open for Mass.

In Christ,

Michael W. Warfel  
Bishop of Great Falls-Billings



*Bishop's Livestock Brand*