

Dear Parishioners, Friends in Christ,

I have been receiving in person and by email some of our parishioners concerns about the lifting of restrictions and the General Dispensation from the obligation to attend Mass in person. The following is an example from a faithful parishioner that lays out the concerns, which I know many of you share.

I am very grateful for your reaching out to me. I have included this letter, and my response, as a way of hoping to put you at ease, as we continue to navigate our way out of this pandemic, especially as we will not be dropping all cautions necessary for us to protect our spiritual and physical health.

Let me know if this helps, or if you have any questions, I will be happy to respond, and our parish staff and ministers will continue to be available to your needs, at Mass, and elsewhere, during this still cautious time. May God, in this interim, help us to be always grateful for our faith in God, for one another, and to look forward to the time when all of this is safely past.

God bless you, and keep you safe, Fr. Bowen

Parishioner's letter

Fr. Bowen, I have read with some concern the Archbishop's lifting of the general dispensation from the obligation to attend Mass in person during the COVID-19 health crisis as well as removing all COVID-19 social distancing restrictions which will both go into effect on June 26 and 27.

I am 79 and my wife is 70. She has blood cancer. While we both have been vaccinated for Covid-19, we share our home with our daughter, son-in-law, and two grandchildren—one age 4 and the other age 2.

CDC has indicated that there is no guarantee Covid-19 shots will still keep us from getting Covid-19 (as you know from what has happened with your father).

In view of all this, can I still be released from Mass attendance in person? Will there still be live streaming June 26 and 27 and after?

Thank you for all the ways you minister to us. I look forward to the time I can worship with you in person and receive Holy Communion once again.

Fr. Gerry's response

Dear *, thanks for your sharing your concerns. We will continue to stream all the Masses, as we have done during the pandemic. We will continue to encourage people who are at risk to be comfortable with remaining home and attending Mass by streaming, while this pandemic continues to unfold.

The lifting by the Bishops of the General Dispensation from the obligation to attend Mass, does not preclude compromised individuals in good faith, from following the current CDC guidelines for keeping safe (that is, absenting themselves from large crowds, or at Mass for health reasons or for family needs.)

Also, since vaccination does not guarantee 100% immunity from Covid infection, and since many individuals, especially children, are either not vaccinated or under the age for vaccination, we will continue to ask our congregation to wear masks during Mass, out of respect for their neighbor and our community health at Mass.

As for the spatial distancing, we are working out how to provide a comfort level for those coming to Church in person, (that is, people may not mind someone sitting behind them, but may not be comfortable with non-family members setting immediately next to them. In that case, we may continue to arrange for people as they take their seats, to use an "X" card, to designate the immediate seats next to them as closed.

Very happy for your thoughts or comments,

God bless, Fr. Gerry