

May 14, 2021

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Christ is Risen!

MASKS: Most of you are likely aware of the new CDC guidelines concerning the wearing of masks. Considering this development, His Eminence Archbishop BENJAMIN has issued the attached archpastoral letter for implementation in the Diocese of the West. While adhering to the CDC guidelines, it also puts the onus on all of us to be respectful of those who continue to wear masks, either out of concern for everyone's health or comfort level or for any personal reason, as well as those who choose not to wear masks. Essentially, everyone should take responsibility for themselves while also remaining concerned for others. Although those of us who have been fully vaccinated can have a level of assurance as we move forward, we all need to remember that COVID-19 has not yet been eradicated and that we must remain vigilant in our response to its ongoing presence in our community. As has been true all along, anyone who has a fever or exhibits any covid symptoms or has otherwise been exposed to someone who has, should refrain from attending services until the incubation period (up to 14 days) has passed.

COMMUNION SPOONS: One of the concessions made in response to COVID-19 in the earliest days of the pandemic was the option of using multiple spoons for administering the Holy Mysteries. This was never to be interpreted as a sign that the Church had changed its teaching or that the Holy Gifts- the very Body and Blood of Christ- would or could be the source of illness. Indeed not. Christ Himself is the source of all health and healing of both body and soul. However, at the time there was extraordinarily little known about the virus and there were many varying and confusing opinions being publicly cited by "experts" that caused concern among even the most faithful of the Faithful. Therefore, the concession of multiple spoons was granted, a concession which we accepted as something temporary within our own parish community. Meanwhile, other parishes in the United States and the Orthodox Churches throughout the world continued with the traditional practice of using only one spoon to administer the Holy Gifts. Because of recent developments and also recognizing and celebrating our unchanged Faith in the Eucharistic Presence of Christ in the "Divine, Holy, Awesome, and Life-Creating Mysteries," we will now return to the traditional practice and use of the one liturgical communion spoon. I have mentioned this before, so it should come as no surprise to you. As is proclaimed when the Holy Gifts are brought forth from the Altar, "In the fear of God and with faith... and love... draw near!"

Allow me to add here that, throughout these many difficult months, you all have shown yourselves to be understanding, patient, and cooperative. I am confident that your love for one another has been the basis for this... a strong foundation that has allowed us to remain faithful and, indeed, "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and forever. Amen." (2 Peter 3:18).

With love in the Risen Lord,

+Bishop Daniel