

Sacred Heart Parish Pastoral Council Zoom Meeting

April 24, 2021

Council members present: Rob Cassleman, Fr. Steve Dublinski, Aurora Horstkamp, Jim Lincoln, Kevin Owens, and Char Snekvik, Chair. Also, Mary Sutherland, parish secretary

Opening Prayer - Our Father.

Coronavirus – re-opening of the church. There are two pieces to look at:

1. **Bringing Masses back to the parish grounds.** It has been cool and wet lately. Next Sunday it is supposed to be only 47 degrees at 8:30 am, which would be too cool for many people to sit out on the lawn. We will still have Mass in the movie theater parking lot on Sunday, May 2.
2. **Has there been any shift in cases that could enable us to move indoors?** We are having Thursday Adoration and Friday rosary indoors now. There were only about three people at each last week. The outdoor noon Mass is well-attended, averaging 12 people. People like that time. Not much has changed, except more people are vaccinated. In Whitman County cases are decreasing in the university but increasing in the community. Test numbers are 40% down, and B117 (the “UK variant”) can spread like wildfire. It is still unknown whether WSU will require vaccination for incoming fall semester. (*Editor’s note, on April 28, WSU announced that they will require it*) There will not be mandatory entry testing for incoming summer session students. By the end of the semester WSU anticipates to have administered 3500 doses. Our respiratory cases continue to be moderately present since March, more than January (sore throats, colds, coughs) which is an indicator of loosening of public health measures amongst the college students. In Whitman County as of April 27, 14,547 people (29.0%) have received at least one dose and 10,239 (20.4%) are fully vaccinated.

(See https://www.covidactnow.org/us/washington-wa/county/whitman_county/?s=1788707)

Benchmark for reopening: We need to see a trend of lower cases over two weeks. If cases get down to 100 per 100,000 and look likely to stay that way we can reopen. We will do this gradually, with some indoor and some outdoor masses. If most people are vaccinated that will be the most helpful.

Children from 12 to 15 may be able to be vaccinated this summer. Vaccine trials for younger children are ongoing. Those vaccines may be authorized by fall. B117 is transmitting across all age groups, including children, so as our older population becomes more vaccinated, the children are still vulnerable. Masks and distancing still need to be enforced. Luckily children have fewer co-morbidities for severe disease, unlike the older population.

We need to be sure we have sufficient air filtration. We could contact the manufacturer of our filtration units, or there is also a parishioner who worked in that field at WSU who may be able to help. Rob will contact him.

Closing thought: We are in the beginning of the fourth surge, but now it is a matter of vaccination winning this race. We can do the masking and distancing and avoiding high risk indoor venues as the number of people infected decreases, but ultimately, we need herd immunity from the virus. We need to stop its replication which stops mutations, and that means we really have to convince those unvaccinated to be vaccinated for all of us to win this battle.

Next meeting: Saturday, May 8, 10 AM on Zoom.

Closing prayer: Glory Be