



ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST

Catholic Church & School

August 30, 2020

Dear Parishioners:

Last week, the Sheboygan Press reported that my colleagues serving the northside parishes in the City of Sheboygan – Fr. Mark Brandl and Fr. Norberto Sandoval – had tested positive for COVID-19, resulting the both of them being quarantined and the parishes closed for public services through Friday, August 28th. At last word, both priests are doing well and the parishes are expecting to resume their public celebrations of Mass this weekend (August 29-30).

I suspect that more than a few of you were wondering about the run-up to the decision to shut down of the three parishes. For specifics, you can “google” Sheboygan North Catholic Parishes, which will open to a “COVID-19 Update” containing a running narrative on the topic. Generally speaking, Fr. Mark, Fr. Norbie and the Northside Parishes were following protocols established under “The Catholic Comeback” directives of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, which in three clearly defined situations tell us to report the matter to the Sheboygan County Health and Human Services Division of the Public Health Department and “Follow their instructions.” Those three situations are:

1. If a parishioner attends Mass and later discovers they have tested positive for COVID-19
2. If a staff member tests positive for COVID-19
3. If a priest tests positive for COVID-19

The protocols mention two other situations that could arise:

1. If a priest has been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19
2. If a staff member has a member of their household test positive for COVID-19

In each instance, the priest or staff member “must self-quarantine” and “out of an abundance of caution, avoid contact with others.” The priest should be tested for COVID-19 and do no public ministry until the test results are known; the staff member should consider being tested for COVID-19 and work from home until test results are known. If in either case test results are positive, the matter is referred, as above, to the Sheboygan County Public Health Department, and we would “follow their instructions” from there.

So, at STA and SJB we will continue to observe both social distancing and the mask mandate. But as important as these measures are, they do not guarantee that we will never encounter one of the situations outlined above. If that happens, we will do our best to keep you informed of what has occurred and the steps we are taking to deal with the occurrence.

Meanwhile, be safe, and please practice “an abundance of caution” for your own benefit and for the benefit of those around you.

Fr. Philip D. Reifenberg, Pastor