

Covid concerns from a pediatrician

Shared by Fr. Daniel Griffith

September 2, 2021

“As I have had my spiritual health cared for at Our Lady of Lourdes for over 7 years from the time I started medical school at UMN through my pediatrics residency training and to now, I want to first extend my deepest gratitude for everything the parish has done. Throughout the challenges of the pandemic, I am sincerely grateful for everything Lourdes did from virtually broadcasting mass to establishing social distance and masking guidelines to even giving me a personalized phone call to check-in and take prayer requests. The parish has truly done an excellent job of creating and maintaining community during a time when it has been easy to feel isolated.

As I have completed my specialty training in pediatrics in the heat of the pandemic the last 18 months, I have had the heartbreaking experience of caring for previously healthy children who needed breathing tubes inserted and ventilator support from COVID. I have cared for multiple previously healthy children who now have profound neurologic deficits due to complications of blood clotting and inflammation caused by COVID. I have cared for children who need strong medicines to increase their blood pressure because of the way the virus damaged their hearts. And, as many children and families that I have seen devastated by COVID, I recognize my experience does not even scratch the surface in the quantity of devastation seen by the adult providers. Throughout all of this, I continue to see Christ in the service and compassion of my colleagues and in the face of my patients. I have continued to find peace, comfort, and spiritual guidance at Our Lady of Lourdes.

I was really grateful for your guidance to the parish regarding masking at Lourdes that was shared in early August. Since that time, there have been some additional announcements and findings from the medical community. Recently, the [CDC published](#) that women who are pregnant and contract COVID are at increased risk for pregnancy complications, including preterm births. According to the [Minnesota Department of Health](#), the number of cases in our state is again increasing, and our hospitalizations are also increasing. We continue to face the spread of the more contagious Delta variant, and we continue to see asymptomatic carriers spreading the virus. The [American Academy of Pediatrics](#) has recommended universal masking at school for children 2 years and older and all staff to protect the health of children. I argue that the same evidence providing this recommendation in schools could be extrapolated to churches.

As I sat in mass this morning, I could not help but feel a sense of unease and worry as I saw the young infants and children scattered throughout the congregation. As I listened to the reading from James today to "be doers of the word and not hearers only," I knew I needed to reach out to you and the parish leadership, and I kindly request that we do more to protect these vulnerable populations (the unborn, children, pregnant women, immunosuppressed, and elderly) of our parish. As a pediatrician, my heart particularly is drawn to protecting the children

- many of whom are too young to currently receive the protections afforded by the vaccine. Specifically, I request additional effort to increase the proportion of parishioners wearing masks (which, anecdotally, felt to be at/slightly above 50% at the 10am mass today) and socially distance between and within pews. I ask that you continue to encourage eligible parishioners to receive the vaccine (which is now [FDA](#) approved) and refrain from attending mass in-person if they have ill symptoms.

Thank you for your openness to discussion and my perspective. If I can be of any service in sharing medical information or my experiences, I am happy to help. I recognize that my requests do not come without complications from the divisive and political terrain we are traveling these days.

As a final concluding thought, I have found the scripture passage "whatsoever you do to the least of your brothers and sisters, you do unto me" as a source of strength in the midst of my work in this pandemic. I believe that masking, socially distancing, and getting vaccinated truly are acts of faith that affirm the dignity of all life – from the unborn to the elderly.

With deep gratitude and respect.”