

DIOCESE OF BISMARCK



April 30, 2020

To the Catholic Faithful of the Diocese of Bismarck,

As we have been living under the restrictions to daily life due to the COVID-19 pandemic and especially the restrictions on our Catholic liturgical and sacramental life, it is my fervent prayer and hope that our appreciation and longing for the Most Holy Eucharist have been deepened and strengthened.

In recent days our Governor has decided to modify some of the restrictions placed upon us and listening carefully to him and in consultation with Bishop Folda, I have decided to modify some of the directives I issued for the Diocese of Bismarck on March 19, 2020. I am not lifting all restrictions, but I am modifying some for the present. What I ask is your continued patience and cooperation for your own welfare and that of others.

To this end and first, the dispensation from the obligation to attend and participate at Mass on Sundays and Holy Days remains in effect until further notice for all who may be hesitant or afraid at this time to be in larger gatherings. Parishes will continue to provide the opportunity to view Mass online.

If you or anyone in your household is sick in any way or is in one of the more vulnerable groups of persons at a higher risk of contracting the COVID-19, please stay at home until such time as you or that person is able to return to Church for Mass.

However, what I must emphasize is this: what we have come to understand as "social distancing" must be strictly kept by all priests, deacons and lay faithful at all times in all liturgical and sacramental settings. Therefore, I make the following modifications to some of the directives of March 19, 2020.

1. Daily Mass may resume according to the schedule determined by the Pastor as of Wednesday, May 6, 2020. Sunday Mass may resume according to the schedule determined by the Pastor as of 4:00 P.M. Saturday, May 9, 2020 under the following conditions:
 - A. Family households may sit together in one pew and all other persons must maintain social distancing in Church; from front to back, in every Church every other pew is to be left empty.
 - B. Holy Communion will continue to be distributed under the sacred species of the Consecrated Host only, and Holy Communion is to be received in the hand only.
 - C. Only ordained clergy (priests and deacons) and canonically instituted Acolytes are to distribute Holy Communion, no Extra-ordinary ministers are to distribute until further notice. Social distancing is to be maintained by the faithful as they receive Holy Communion.
 - D. The exchange of the Sign of Peace remains suspended.

- E. There is to be no Offertory procession to present the gifts for Mass until further notice.
- F. If the Pastor has accompaniment for Mass, only a cantor and a musician are to be present and there is to be no Choir.
- 2. The directives for weddings and funerals are modified as follows:
 - A. For weddings all immediate and extended family members of the Bride and Groom may be present but are to maintain social distancing. The restrictions on the wedding party itself and the priest/deacon remain unchanged.
 - B. For funerals, all immediate and extended family members may attend but are to maintain social distancing. The directives for the Wake and Vigil Service and luncheon after the funeral at the Church remain unchanged.
- 3. The directives for the Sacrament of Baptism are modified as follows:
 - A. For Baptisms, all immediate and extended family members may be present but are to maintain social distancing. No more than one person may be baptized in any given ceremony until further notice.

As mentioned, all other directives given on March 19, 2020 remain in effect until further notice. Let us continue to pray daily for the powerful intercessions of Our Mother of Perpetual Help and Saint Joseph before Almighty God, seeking His mercy upon each of us and all of us.

Know that I pray daily for all of you and asking your kind prayers for our priests and deacons, may we increase in virtue and holiness of life for the greater honor and glory of God!

The Most Reverend David D. Kagan
Bishop of Bismarck

Mr. Dale Eberle
Chancellor