



DIOCESE OF GRAND RAPIDS

Office of the Bishop

February 12, 2021

Dear Friends in Christ,

Last March, I made the difficult decision as bishop to suspend the public celebration of Masses. Because of the unknowns at that time, it was a prudent decision in the best interest of the faithful. As we begin this holy season of Lent, we have now been living with the COVID-19 pandemic for almost a year. The pandemic has changed and challenged us. Its impact continues to be seen and felt.

Lent is a time where we “search and examine our ways, and return to the Lord!” (Lamentations 3:40) For some of us, this may reveal that while we have resumed many activities, we have not prioritized our return to Mass. I invite those of us who are able to return and celebrate the Eucharist in the parish. The celebration of Mass is the summit toward which the Church’s activity is directed and the source from which all her power flows.

Thankfully, many of us are once again able to center our lives upon the Mass. Health care professionals have reviewed the diocesan COVID-19 mitigation strategies. These strategies have allowed us to return safely to the celebration of the sacraments. If you have returned to Mass, I encourage you to invite your fellow parishioners, family, and friends. Do not underestimate the power of your personal invitation!

Lent is an excellent opportunity to extend that invitation. It is “...a favourable time to prepare to celebrate with renewed hearts the great mystery of the death and resurrection of Jesus, the cornerstone of our personal and communal Christian life. We must continually return to this mystery in mind and heart...” (Pope Francis, Message for Lent, 2020)

Nonetheless, while I invite those of you who are able to return to Mass, I also know some of you cannot attend Mass in person because of health reasons or other excusing factors. If you find yourself in this situation, the dispensation from the obligation of attending Sunday Mass has been extended until further notice. This dispensation does not apply to those who are able to attend Mass. All baptized Catholics are reminded of their obligation to keep the Lord’s Day holy.

I encourage you to view the diocesan website (grdiocese.org) and social media channels (Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram) for Lenten resources and to stay connected to your faith and what is happening in the diocese. During this holy season, may we allow ourselves to return to God and reflect on the hope that remains through Christ’s Resurrection!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend David J. Walkowiak
Bishop of Grand Rapids