



CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF FORT WORTH
THE BISHOP'S OFFICE



PASTORAL LETTER
TO ALL PRIESTS, DEACONS, SEMINARIANS, RELIGIOUS MEN AND WOMEN,
AND FAITHFUL LAITY OF THE DIOCESE OF FORT WORTH

March 4, 2021

Dear Friends in Christ,

As I am certain you are aware, Governor Greg Abbott has issued an executive order to take effect on March 10, 2021 rescinding his current statewide order requiring the wearing of masks in public spaces and businesses. Governor Abbott stated, “Today’s announcement does not abandon safe practices that Texans have mastered over the past year. Instead, it is a reminder that each person has a role to play in their own personal safety and the safety of others. With this executive order, we are ensuring that all businesses and families in Texas have the freedom to determine their own destiny.”

Since the start of this pandemic and in the exercise of our religious freedom through the provision of such essential services as outreach to the poor, the education and formation of our school children, the administration of the sacraments, and the daily and Sunday gatherings for the celebration of the Eucharist, the priests and faithful of the Diocese of Fort Worth have done so safely, responsibly, and mindful of the love of God and of neighbor, body and soul. Our protocols, including the wearing of masks, the employment of safe physical distancing, the reception of Holy Communion only in the hand, and the frequent and regular use of sanitizing and hand washing, have enabled everyone, including the vulnerable, to participate physically in the participation at Mass if they judged it to be prudent to do so.

After consultation with my priests, civic officials, members of the laity, and professionals in the fields of medicine and public health I judge it very prudent currently to [maintain our protocols that have been in effect since September 25, 2020](#). It is our Christian responsibility to maintain our concern for others especially those most vulnerable so that we attend Mass safely and contribute to the common good of our parishes and the larger community of our towns, counties, and state.

We are moving gradually towards a time when we can more safely relax our restrictions and protocols as hospitalizations decrease and people are immunized and as we gain insight through ongoing consultation with others. Yet, let us be clear that as the Church, we are neither moving towards a modern sense of subservience to the civil government nor towards an equally contemporary disposition of self-reliance and autonomy—negligent of our natural responsibilities in charity and justice towards God and our neighbor.

I am grateful for the generosity of each and all of you during this time that has required a more

THE CATHOLIC CENTER

800 West Loop 820 South • Fort Worth, TX 76108 • (817) 560-3300 • Fax (817) 244-8839 • fwdioc.org
officeofthebishop@fwdioc.org

intentional practice of the virtue of solidarity and compassion for our neighbors. Please be assured of my prayers for you during this season of Lent as I seek the same from you on my behalf. I remain,

Sincerely Yours in Christ,

+ Michael F. Olson

Most Reverend Michael F. Olson, STD, MA
Bishop of Fort Worth

