



THE DIOCESE OF KALAMAZOO

July 31, 2020

Feast of St. Ignatius Loyola

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Our lives have been impacted by these challenging days of this world-wide pandemic in many ways, including our lives of faith. One of those impacts has affected the reception of the Sacraments, which in some cases have been delayed or made inaccessible. In any given year, I have the privilege of celebrating the Sacrament of Confirmation for on average 1,000 young people and adults throughout our beautiful Diocese. Of the many wonderful aspects of being your Bishop, celebrating Confirmations, and visiting so many of our Parishes for these major events, are truly highlights of my ministry.

However, due to COVID-19, all Confirmations during the spring of this year were postponed. It was my intention and sincere hope that this fall, we would be able to schedule regional Confirmations in order to celebrate the postponed spring Confirmations as well as those scheduled for this fall. However, it has become very clear that will not be possible since the pandemic remains a very serious concern, in that we are still restricted in what we can do, and must maintain social distancing with limited numbers of people able to gather at one time.

During these past few weeks, I have prayerfully and carefully pondered what to do. I have discussed this matter with our Presbyteral Council, with my diocesan staff, and with all our priests and deacons at virtual Deanery meetings held last week. As a result, I have decided to make available to each Pastor the possibility of requesting the extraordinary permission to celebrate the Sacrament of Confirmation for those in their Parish who are prepared and eligible to receive this Sacrament. This permission, once granted, will be valid only from August 1, 2020 until November 28, 2020. After consultation and proper planning with his Parish leadership and the families of the Candidates for Confirmation, each Pastor will submit the information with a request for permission to me. Once I have reviewed the materials and determine that all is in order, I will grant the permission.

While I will not have the joy of actually being present for each parish celebration of Confirmation, I do intend to be directly involved in several ways: I am writing a special Pastoral Letter to those to be Confirmed, encouraging them during this important time in their faith journey; I will be

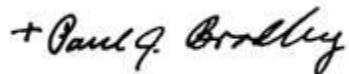
providing a video message to each parish group of Candidates in which I will share with them how special this Sacrament is for their lives, and to express my personal disappointment at not being able to be with them in person; and I will provide for each Candidate a signed remembrance card from me on the day of their Confirmation. In addition, on the day of each Parish Confirmation, I will offer my Mass that same day for their spiritual intentions.

For the Bishop not to administer this Sacrament with our young people is not ideal; it is also a great personal disappointment for me. However, to delay or withhold the Sacrament and its graces until the pandemic is over would be an even greater disappointment. These Candidates for Confirmation, prepared and disposed to receive this Sacrament, need the guidance and strength of the Holy Spirit, and the seven-fold gifts He will bring to them: Wisdom, Understanding, Counsel, Fortitude (Courage), Knowledge, Piety and Fear of the Lord (Wonder and Awe). Therefore, for the greater good, I am providing this exception and willing to grant this extraordinary permission so that the Sacramental graces can be received.

Please prayerfully remember all those to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation this fall. Let us also pray for one another, that our faith will remain strong, and that God's Loving Presence and the gifts of the Sacraments will keep us alive in His Spirit!

Assuring you of my daily prayers, and humbly asking for your prayers for me, I remain

Faithfully yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Paul J. Bradley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

Most Rev. Paul J. Bradley
Bishop of Kalamazoo