



THE DIOCESE OF KALAMAZOO

Office of the Bishop

May 31, 2020
Solemnity of Pentecost

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love!

This Pentecost Sunday is an especially joyful day in our beloved Diocese. Today we begin the gradual return to full participation in the life of the Church through our first weekend in Level 1 for the public celebration of Masses in a very modified manner. Although we know we still have a long way to go, it's a joy-filled experience to finally welcome people back to celebrate the Holy Mass together.

As we are all keenly aware, it has been more than two months since March 20, 2020, when I suspended the public celebration of Mass and the sacraments due to the serious health concerns surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic. Following a recent series of meetings with all members of the clergy, as well as Diocesan Staff, whose goal was to develop a comprehensive return to public worship plan, I am confident in saying that our parishes are committed to complying with the safety and civil guidelines we have been given and to implementing safety and hygiene protocols. I want to commend and thank all who are contributing to these Diocesan-wide efforts to assist in the preparation and planning and to welcome back fellow parishioners. While the celebration of Masses will certainly be different for the foreseeable future, it is critically important that all of us remain committed to complying with all safety protocols for the sake of the common good and for everyone's health and well-being.

I am very pleased to warmly welcome each member of our faith community who is able to return to the public celebration of Masses. However as we know during Level 1, not everyone will be able to attend Mass physically due to space limitations and the need to protect all who are especially vulnerable to this devastating virus. That is why the dispensation from attending Mass on Sundays and Holy Days remains in effect until September 6, 2020. It is also why I have encouraged parishes to continue live-streaming Masses so that everyone in our Diocese can continue to "keep holy the Lord's Day" by spending time in prayer, meditating on the Lord's Passion, Death and Resurrection, and participating in Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy.

Our special celebration of "The Year of the Eucharist," originally announced in my pastoral letter *Loving God and Our Neighbor: Living the Mission of the Eucharist*, continues for the remainder of this calendar year and its observance remains vitally important for the spiritual health and vitality of our Diocese. Especially when "social distancing" is necessary to contain the spread of COVID-19, the spiritual closeness of Christ is essential to our physical, mental and emotional well-being as missionary disciples who gather around the Lord of Life and who are sent out by Him to do His work.

None of us ever imagined that during the Year of the Eucharist the majority of our people would be denied the ability to receive the Eucharist in Holy Communion. What we have learned, however, is that the desire for sacramental unity with Christ is stronger than ever. We pray that by the grace of the Holy Spirit this period of temporary absence from Holy Communion will lead to a fervent renewal of devotion to this extraordinary gift that Christ gives us whenever we receive His Body and Blood in the Eucharist.

I want to conclude these brief reflections on this extraordinarily special observance of Pentecost Sunday by offering heartfelt words of appreciation and thanks to the thousands of health care and public service professionals who have cared for our sick and provided for the "front-line", essential services in our communities.

215 N. Westnedge Ave. • Kalamazoo, MI 49007-3706



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I also extend special acknowledgement to all our Graduates whose hard work and academic achievement deserve far better commencement ceremonies than have been able to be provided under these very unusual circumstances. May the Holy Spirit guide you in all your future endeavors. On another note, I offer regrets to couples whose weddings had to be cancelled or delayed. In a very special way, I express my heartfelt condolences and prayers to individuals and families who have experienced the death of loved ones during this time and been unable to provide them with the normal Funeral Masses and Burial Rites due to this awful pandemic.

On a joyful note for all of us as the Body of Christ, I particularly want to welcome into the Church all those whose journey of faith had to be temporarily suspended at the time of the Easter Vigil, but who now will be received into full communion or be baptized, confirmed, and be one with us at the Table of the Lord on Pentecost or in the near future. May the Holy Spirit continue to guide you in the ways of faith.

These have been difficult times, to be sure, but because we are People of Faith, we look to the magnificent gift of the Holy Spirit as a sign of renewed hope and vitality in our Church and in the world we live in.

As we now begin to return to some level of normalcy, we can only do so with a strong faith in Jesus and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. And so we pray: "Come, Holy Spirit." Let us adapt St. Francis' Prayer to pray in our own uncertain times: "*Where there is darkness, let there be light. Where there is sorrow bring joy. And where there is doubt and uncertainty, fill us with holy hope.*"

Asking the Blessing of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit upon you and our entire Diocese, I remain

Faithfully yours in Christ,

Most Rev. Paul J. Bradley
Bishop of Kalamazoo