



## Diocese of Rockford

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Office of the Bishop

November 19, 2020

Dear Monsignor/Father,

I write to you today to inform you of mitigation rules issued by Governor Pritzker on Tuesday November 16, 2020 which take effect this Friday November 20. The rules affect all counties in Illinois and therefore, all our parishes, schools, and Diocesan facilities. The following are the applicable mitigation rules:

Meetings, social events and gatherings. Meeting rooms, banquet centers, private party rooms, private clubs and country clubs may not host gatherings.

Office. All employees who can work remotely should work remotely.

1. **Except for funeral visitations and wakes at funeral homes, non-sacramental in-person meetings and gatherings have been banned by the State.**

Effective Friday of this week, please host all your non-sacramental meetings and non-sacramental gatherings virtually or postpone them until the ban on these activities is lifted by the State. Meetings and gatherings that are subject to the ban include RCIA and Adult Formation classes, parent sacramental preparation meetings, finance council, parish council and committee meetings, Bible study, men's group, and other group gatherings.

Additionally, all non-parish group meetings that occur on your premises, such as AA, Knights of Columbus, and Boy Scout and Girl Scout meetings and gatherings, and other groups, cannot meet on parish premises until further notice from the pastor or facility manager.

Funeral visitations and wakes are not sacramental gatherings and thus these should be held at the funeral home, not at the Church. Funeral homes are required to limit attendance at visitations/wakes to 10, not including staff. If the attendance exceeds this limit, the priest/deacon or bereavement minister is not required to stay to conduct prayers because of the risk it poses to the minister.

2. **Schools are not affected by this mitigation rule. Religious education classes are not affected if held in the school building.**

The above mitigation rule banning meetings and gatherings does not apply to schools. Although religious education classes are considered non-sacramental gatherings, follow the Diocese's Reopening Plan for Schools if your religious education classes are held in the school building. However, if religious education classes are

held in the Church building, the parish office or other building, those classes should be conducted virtually or postponed until the ban is lifted by the State.

**3. Sacramental gatherings stay at 30% of room capacity with social distancing.**

Governor Pritzker's mitigation rules do not apply to sacramental gatherings. Sacramental gatherings include: Masses, baptisms, weddings, funerals, First Holy Communion events, Confirmation events, and Confessions. To determine the allowable attendance at sacramental gatherings, follow "Back in His Presence" rules issued by Bishop Malloy, which currently permit attendance to a maximum of 30 percent of capacity of the space, provided everyone wears a mask, hands are frequently sanitized, social distancing can be accomplished, and the cleaning and disinfecting guidelines are followed.

**4. Your employees should work remotely if their jobs can be performed remotely.**

Under the new mitigation rule effective this Friday November 20, 2020, employees who can perform their job remotely may work remotely. If an employee's job cannot be performed remotely, the employee should work at the workplace. If a part of the employee's job can be performed remotely without burdening your facility, consider a hybrid work schedule where the employee works partly remotely and partly in the workplace.

If you have employees whose job is not needed at this time, consider furloughing the employee, which means the employee will be called back to work when the need resumes; or consider a lay off which means the employee does not have an expectation of being called back to work. In either circumstance, the furloughed or laid off employee is eligible to receive unemployment benefits. On the Separation from Employment Form, you would note whether this is a furlough or lay off, and also note lack of work due to covid-19 pandemic as the reason for the furlough or layoff. The company that manages our unemployment compensation claims has informed us that lack of work due to covid-19 pandemic is a valid basis for awarding unemployment benefits.

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This letter will be shared today with all principals and superintendents, department heads, business managers, and Regional DREs. With thanks for your continued cooperation and assistance during this time, I am

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ *David J. Malloy*

David J. Malloy  
Bishop of Rockford