

DIOCESE OF MARQUETTE  
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July 28, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Greetings in Jesus Christ.

Let us together gaze upon Jesus on the cross and thank him for offering his life for us. Filled with his love, our Lord calls us to love each other as he has loved us. This time of COVID-19 pandemic has been difficult for all of us, and if we look around we see bitter divisions in our country. It is important that we do not let those divisions creep into the Church, so let us all join together in sharing the love of Jesus which heals divisions.

One area of division is the wearing of face masks. Though the scientific evidence on the effectiveness of face masks in limiting the spread of COVID-19 is still inconclusive, there is sufficient evidence to judge prudently that we should wear face masks to limit the spread of the disease.

While some may find wearing a facemask to be an intrusion on their freedom, authentic freedom does not mean that we can simply do as we please. Rather, authentic freedom means choosing to love. Wearing face masks out of concern for each other is an expression of the freedom that God has given to us. I know that wearing a mask can be uncomfortable, but it is a sacrifice that we can make out of love for each other.

Therefore, in the Diocese of Marquette, effective Saturday, August 1, 2020, it is mandatory for everyone over the age of 5 to wear a face mask for indoor celebrations of Mass and the sacraments, and for all indoor parish meetings and events. I recommend that those who have difficulty wearing face masks due to health concerns refrain from such indoor celebrations and gatherings at parishes, while the pandemic threat persists. This does not change the provisions for priests, deacons and other ministers in the sanctuary that I made in a letter dated May 7, 2020.

I understand that for many, being unable to approach the Lord's altar in community at this time is a great sadness. I recognize and appreciate your sacrifice and pray for the time we can all gather for worship together. My dispensation from Sunday Mass obligation continues to be in effect for as long as necessary. If you are unable to attend Sunday Mass, you have not sinned. However, you are encouraged to watch Sunday Mass on television or livestreamed on YouTube from the cathedral, or prayerfully read the Mass readings or other spiritual materials.

Let us join our sacrifices with Jesus on the cross and call upon the Lord to heal divisions and strengthen us, so that we may share his love with each other.

May the love of Christ grant us peace and heal divisions.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read 'John F. Doerfler'. The signature is written in a cursive style.

Most Reverend John F. Doerfler, STD, JCL  
Bishop of Marquette