



DIOCESE OF GREEN BAY

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OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

October 5, 2020

Dear Friends and Followers of Jesus,

Over the past week, I have reflected deeply on the Covid-19 “Very High Risk Alert” throughout the sixteen counties of the Diocese of Green Bay. Much of my discernment has been around how we might be bold in living our Catholic Faith in Jesus Christ while also remaining prudent and charitable in our efforts to keep ourselves and others safe and stop the spread of this disease.

In the past few weeks the number of cases has increased fourfold within many areas of our diocese, and we are being counted among the worst outbreaks in the country. **Therefore, given the recent markedly high rise in the number of cases, and after consultation with diocesan leadership and medical professionals, I have decided to dispense again the Catholic faithful in the Diocese of Green Bay from the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays.**

I grant this dispensation to help in preventing the community spread of this disease. I have further done this for those who might be unable to come to Mass because of significant health concerns as well as for those who have been burdened in conscience. After the current high numbers of infection have subsided and stabilized, we will return to the Sunday obligation requirements. Even though the dispensation is once again granted, it has now become very obvious that establishing a fixed date is not prudent. **Let me be very clear, however, this is NOT a closure of public Masses on Sundays or weekdays. We will continue to celebrate the Mass publically every Sunday at all of our parishes for those who are able to attend and willing to strictly follow the proper health protocols.**

As I indicated at the outset of this terrible virus, and have repeated in the intervening months, I will pay close attention to the data presented by the medical community and make decisions in regard to our activities based on this data. During this time of increased infection, our parishes will need to become even more vigilant in regard to observing the health protocols so as to prevent the spread of disease and to allow as many people as is safe to come to Mass without fear of infection. *The wearing of masks is mandatory at Masses celebrated throughout our diocese and as your shepherd I am asking you to do so. I am also requiring that pastors and pastoral leaders make ‘provision’ on Church premises for those who cannot wear a mask for health reasons or (other serious reasons) to attend Mass and receive Holy Communion.*

I also want to point out that there is great medicinal value in the Eucharist and the Sunday gathering for Holy Mass. The Eucharist itself has tremendous healing properties since it is the very Body and Blood of Jesus Christ and being together to Worship God at Mass every Sunday, even in modest numbers, greatly strengthens our faith.

Let us pray mightily for the end of the scourge of this pandemic and for the protection of each one of us, our loved ones, and all of our brothers and sisters in Christ and in the human family. Jesus reminds us to not be afraid. Let us place our trust in Him.

In Christ,

Most Reverend David L. Ricken, DD, JCL  
Bishop of Green Bay