



## DIOCESE OF FAIRBANKS

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### OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

6 August 2020

#### *Prayers for Physical, Spiritual and Social Healing*

Dear Brothers & Sisters in Christ,

On 5 July 2020, at his General Audience, Pope Francis introduced a new catechesis series on healing the world that focuses on physical, spiritual and social healing. Pope Francis introduced this new series by drawing attention to Jesus' miraculous healing of the paralytic at Capernaum.

“Jesus not only heals the paralytic but also forgives his sins and renews his and his friends' lives as if they are reborn. It is a physical and spiritual healing, the fruit of personal and social contact,” the Pope says, “wondering how much Jesus' encounter and His healing action must have helped this friendship and faith grow in that house.”

As Pope Francis focuses on physical, spiritual and social healing, I see a great hunger and thirst in our society as we continue to navigate the rough waters of COVID-19. Some of the parishes in the Diocese of Fairbanks have returned to public worship but clearly not all. I am aware of many villages that have implemented strict protocols to mitigate the potential spread of the virus. The number of daily COVID positive cases still remains quite high, and many communities are responding by implementing guidelines to assist in curbing the spread.

I have written a variety of Official Decrees regarding celebration of Mass, other sacraments and gatherings in our church buildings. Also, I lifted a General Dispensation but noting that those in high risk groups, or those living with individuals in high risk groups, are dispensed because of the potential exposure to COVID. It is impossible to address every possible pastoral situation that arises. So, I am asking the faithful to work directly with their parish priest, parish administrator or regional coordinator to discuss a dispensation from public attendance of Mass. Also, a friendly reminder that we still must “keep Holy the Sabbath” which can be facilitated through on-line Mass attendance, and other liturgical celebrations that various communities are facilitating while respecting local guidelines.

While attending Mass or a Communion Service in a church building, I strongly encourage you to wear a mask and maintain a 6-foot social distance between households.

After consulting with medical and scientific professionals, we are in this for the long haul. My concern echoes the words of Pope Francis regarding those persons in need of physical, spiritual and social healing. I urge you to reach out to those that are home bound, in the hospital or any situation of isolation. My father is in a care home and has had no visitors since the middle of March. It is truly affecting his spiritual, psychological and physical health. As missionary disciples, we grow in our care, concern and creativity to reach out to our brothers and sisters in need.

Be assured of my ongoing prayers for physical, spiritual and social healing in our society. Together let us turn to Jesus the Divine Physician.

Sincerely in Christ,

†Most Reverend Chad W. Zielinski  
Catholic Bishop of Northern Alaska  
Diocese of Fairbanks



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