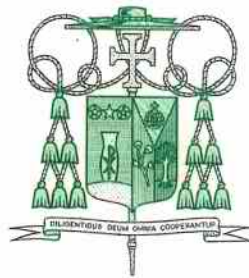


Diocese of Beaumont

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February 15, 2016

To the Faithful of the Diocese of Beaumont

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

On January 1, 2016, new legislation went into effect in Texas allowing those with licenses issued by the State to openly carry handguns in places not prohibited by law. This law revises the current "concealed carry" law, but keeps in place the requirements that those with licenses to carry handguns must be at least 21, have passed a criminal background check, and have received classroom and shooting range instruction.

By law, a licensed carrier may NOT carry a handgun, concealed or openly, on a school campus.

I strongly encourage those who choose to exercise this right to do so in a prudent and responsible manner. With respect to our communal worship, I believe that openly carrying a weapon is not appropriate during the Sacred Liturgy and may cause great discomfort to at least some gathered in worship alongside us.

Accordingly, as Bishop, I ask the faithful of the Diocese of Beaumont and guests of our churches to observe my instruction that weapons are NOT to be openly carried inside of our churches during Holy Mass or at any other times of public worship. Peace Officers commissioned by local, state and federal agencies are exempt from this instruction. I also ask that individuals NOT openly carry a weapon onto any parish and diocesan property or buildings.

As Texans adjust to this new law, I also encourage the clergy and faithful of the Diocese to address any questions that may arise with calmness, kindness and respect, taking into consideration both the legitimate feelings and the rights of all involved.

Please direct any questions that may come up regarding this instruction or the position of the Diocese of Beaumont to the Office of the Bishop (bishop@dioceseofbmt.org) at the Diocesan Pastoral Center (Chancery).

For the churches of the Diocese, the boxed statement on the next page is to be inserted into Sunday bulletins, and it is to be read during the announcements. Copies should also be available at the entrances of the church and other parish buildings, and posted on parish, diocesan, and school websites.

OPEN CARRY & HOLY MASS; PARISH & DIOCESAN PROPERTY/BUILDINGS

Respecting the right of Texans to defend themselves and their families while at the same time being considerate of those who may be uncomfortable around weapons in the context of our sacred liturgies, Bishop Curtis J. Guillory, has instructed that weapons are not to be openly carried inside our churches during Holy Mass or at any other times of public worship. Peace Officers commissioned by local, state and federal agencies are exempt from this instruction. The bishop also instructed that weapons are not to be openly carried onto any parish and diocesan property or buildings. He reminds everyone that, by law, a licensed carrier may NOT carry a handgun, concealed or openly, on a school campus. For more information, visit www.dioceseofbmt.org.

If a person who is lawfully carrying a weapon in an open manner enters a church, a parish building, or any parish and diocesan property, then ushers, greeters, clergy and program directors are asked to notify that person of Bishop Guillory's instruction.

As always, if someone is acting suspiciously or if an individual perceives danger to himself or others, call 9-1-1 and follow local security procedures.



Most Rev. Curtis J. Guillory, S.V.D., D.D.
Bishop of Beaumont

February 15, 2016