



## DIOCESE OF WINONA - ROCHESTER

### OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

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May 23, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters in the Lord:

Christ is risen! Alleluia!

I wish to let you know of an important breakthrough in our State of Minnesota that will allow for increased opportunities for public worship for all people. This breakthrough is consistent with our need to protect public health as we take significant precautions in how we come together for public worship. A new executive order by Governor Walz will soon allow faith communities to expand indoor gatherings up to 25 percent of normal capacity with a maximum of 250 people and outdoor gatherings of up to 250 people, beginning May 27. Governor Walz and his administration hope that when faith communities gather, they will do so consistent with public health guidance. We pledge to be good citizens when offering worship in our communities and to work with public officials to promote the common good.

The Catholic bishops of Minnesota believe that the prior rules limiting faith-based gatherings to ten people burdened the liberty of the Church to bring Mass and the Sacraments to the faithful. We believe that the Eucharist is the bread of everlasting life and the source and summit of our faith. The life of faith was receiving unequal treatment, as allowances were made for other, less essential activities. The new executive order removes that burden on the Church and allows us to bring the Eucharist, the food of everlasting life, to our community.

I wish to thank Governor Walz, Lieutenant Governor Flanagan, and the other members of the governor's team for their dialogue with us to come to a consensus about a reasonable and safe path forward. Although we had previously announced that Mass could begin May 26, we need to move that by one day to May 27, to allow the Governor's executive order clarifying the allowed capacity for gatherings to go into effect.

We will also make small adjustments to our protocols consistent with the guidance that will be issued by the Minnesota Department of Health. I will be communicating with the Presbyterate of Winona-Rochester this week regarding implementation of these protocols, which will be tailored to each parish's circumstances. The obligation to attend Sunday Mass remains suspended at this time. Parishes are to begin public Masses only when they are able to fulfill all protocols for the safe assembly of people, including sanitization, as well as protocols for the celebration of the Liturgy and the reception of Holy Communion.

As we approach the feast of Pentecost, let us take the opportunity to fervently ask for a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon our Catholic community, that we might come to a deeper recognition of God's love and our responsibility to care for one another. Blessed are you.

Sincerely in Christ,

*+John*

**The Most Reverend John M. Quinn**

Bishop of Winona-Rochester

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