



## DIOCESE OF WINONA-ROCHESTER

### OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

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### STATEMENT REGARDING PUBLIC MASSES

May 15, 2020

Dear Brother Priests, Deacons, Consecrated Men and Women, and God's Holy People,

Thank you for your faithfulness during these unprecedented times. I appreciate your patience, as we all yearn and look forward to the day when we can once again gather together for the celebration of the Eucharist. I also want to express my gratitude toward our priests, for their fidelity to their priestly ministry and their continued service to God's people. As society begins a slow return to a state of normalcy, I write to inform you of statewide efforts toward resuming the public celebration of Holy Mass.

A meeting has been scheduled for Monday, May 18, 2020, between faith leaders and public officials to solicit feedback on a new set of public worship guidelines that the Governor's administration will be producing for churches and other houses of worship. Early next week, all the bishops of Minnesota, will together decide on a path forward, which will include identifying a specific date on which to return to limited public Masses for a number greater than 10 people.

Our decision will be guided by three principles: 1) love of neighbor and concern for the common good, including the health and well-being of our neighbors; 2) respect for public authorities and their directives and guidance; and 3) the rights of the faithful to the Sacraments and the duty of worship we owe to God. The faithful can expect that we will weigh these considerations carefully as part of our common responsibility to the state, while also protecting our liberties to assemble and worship freely.

The date of reopening our churches for worship with more than 10 people is still uncertain. **Until that date is determined, I am authorizing the priests of the diocese, as of May 18, 2020, to resume the celebration of public Masses as long as they adhere to the current directive that no more than 10 people are in attendance (including the priest) and that appropriate social distancing and sanitization protocols are observed. The Dispensation from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass remains in effect until further notice.**

After a date is set for Masses with a larger number of people, each parish may reopen at their own pace, according to the attached protocols, while adapting them as needed to meet your specific circumstances. For further suggestions, the guidelines from the FDLC and Thomistic Institute offer more in-depth guidance. It is suggested that each parish establish a team to help plan for the implementation of the necessary protocols.

As Catholics, we demonstrate our love for Jesus Christ not only at Mass, but by living out the Eucharist by what we do outside of Mass. It is precisely through our love of neighbor and concern for the common good that Catholic parishes, schools, and organizations continue to provide meals for our families, shut-ins and elderly who have no food on their table. We provide daycare for essential workers, spiritual direction for those struggling with the pandemic and their loss of loved ones, as well as assisting parents who juggle working from home while teaching their children through distance learning. The Church is a sign of hope, comfort, and love to everyone.

Let us ask the Lord to help us cultivate patience, serenity, and peace of soul during this pandemic, believing that God will bring many graces from our sacrifices. I will communicate early next week, after the meeting with the other bishops of Minnesota, about the path forward. Blessed are you.

Sincerely in Christ,

+ *John M. Quinn*

Most Rev. John M. Quinn  
Bishop of Winona-Rochester



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## Decree

Due to grave concerns regarding COVID-19 (the novel coronavirus), and mindful of the highly contagious nature of this illness, on March 13, 2020, I first granted the faithful of the Diocese of Winona-Rochester a dispensation from the obligation set out in *CIC* can. 1247 to “participate in the Mass on Sundays and other holy days of obligation.” Then, in a subsequent decree of March 20, 2020, I extended this dispensation.

Now, because of the ongoing, legitimate, and well-founded public health concerns posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, I hereby decree that:

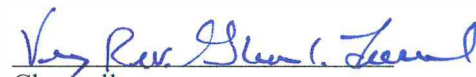
The faithful of the Diocese of Winona-Rochester continue to be dispensed, for an indefinite period of time, from the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation, even while the more fundamental obligation of keeping holy the Lord’s Day still remains. This dispensation will perdure until further notice, even after the celebration of Mass for the general public is resumed.

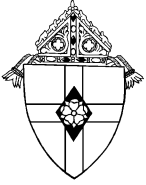
The faithful are pastorally reminded that the circumstances of this pandemic present a truly “just cause” for fulfilling the obligation to receive Holy Communion at least once every year (the so-called “Easter duty”) at a time outside the Easter season, as per *CIC* can. 920 §2.

This decree is effective as of May 15, 2020, and remains in force until the public health issues which motivated it are resolved to a satisfactory extent.

Given on May 15, 2020, in the Diocese of Winona-Rochester, Minnesota.

  
Most Rev. John M. Quinn  
Bishop of Winona-Rochester

  
Chancellor



Protocols for Celebration of Public Masses  
Diocese of Winona-Rochester

- The dispensation from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass remains in effect until further notice.
- If possible, live-streamed or taped Masses should continue while restrictions about attendance at public Masses are in place.
- Those over age 65 and those with underlying health conditions will be strongly encouraged not to attend. It may be possible to bring them the Eucharist as circumstances allow, through a visit from a priest, deacon, or extraordinary minister of Holy Communion. Also, anyone showing any symptoms of sickness, or anyone who has a household member who is sick or showing symptoms of sickness should not come to Church. While much effort will be put into sanitizing your parish facilities, risks still remain for those who choose to attend.
- While future guidance will be given, total attendance is not expected to exceed more than 1/3 of the capacity of the church at each Mass. You and your team will be responsible for figuring out how to limit attendance. It is best to be proactive in making this decision.
- The space will be thoroughly sanitized before and after each service, including all entryways and doors. Holy water fonts should be empty and hymnals removed.
- Signs will be posted concerning social distancing and sanitation requirements.
- Hand sanitizers will be available at all entryways.
- Please follow all local safety orders specifically relating to proper face coverings such as masks.
- People will be instructed not to greet each other by touching.
- Signs and other instructions will encourage normal, safe practices necessary to stop the spread of infection (e.g. cough or sneeze into a shirtsleeve, handkerchief, or tissue; avoid touching the eyes, nose, and mouth to help slow the spread of the virus).
- Ventilation will be increased as much as possible, by opening windows and doors, as weather permits.
- To reduce the spread of the virus, parishioners are encouraged to attend Mass only at their parish.