



DIOCESE OF SAGINAW

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

May 19, 2020

My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Happy Easter! We continue to rejoice in the resurrection of Jesus in these remaining days of the Easter season. The seasons of Lent and Easter have been like no other that we have experienced. These past two months have been very challenging times. This pandemic and the requirements for social distancing has reshaped society. There will be no return to the “old” normal. A “new” normal will immerge from this historic moment in history and in our Church.

There is no question that there is a real hunger and desire for the Faithful to return to the sacramental life of the Church. I write to you to share some good news and some words of caution as we move toward the reopening of our Churches.

As we know, the State of Michigan is allowing for the gradual opening of some businesses and activities as the number of coronavirus cases and deaths from it continue to decrease. We believe that the spiritual life of people is an essential element to life, and therefore, it is time to begin to gradually open this part of society for the communal celebration of the Holy Eucharist.

It is our plan to begin offering public Mass on Monday, May 25, 2020 in parishes that are prepared to do so. There will be the need to follow strict directives in order to diminish the possibility of a “second wave” of the coronavirus. The cooperation of everyone will be required to ensure the continued health and safety of everyone in our communities. The leadership of each parish must determine if the proper protocols and procedures are in place and are able to be carried out before a parish can resume public worship. These protocols and guidelines will require strict adherence for all public liturgies, including weddings, funerals and baptisms.

When you return to the celebration of the Eucharist, you will see things done differently, and things will feel different than when you last attended two months ago. It is imperative for all of us – pastors, parish life directors, parish staff, volunteers, and all the faithful – to work together during these times. We all know that this pandemic is not over, and therefore, each of us must do our part to help ensure the health and safety of everyone in our communities.

May 19, 2020

Page 2

These liturgical Guidelines and Protocols are based upon current guidance issued by the World Health Organization (WHO) and [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](https://www.cdc.gov/) (CDC) and other public health authorities. These guidelines also integrate the requirements of the Catholic Church teaching, liturgical law, and Canon law. These have been formulated with great care to preserve the respect and reverence due to the Holy Eucharist and the powerful liturgical sacramental symbolism of the rites of the Mass. For more information about these directives, please visit www.dioceseofsaginaw.org/

It is very important to remember that this coronavirus does not discriminate, and no gathering of the People of God is immune to this indiscriminate evil. As we gather back for the celebration of the Eucharist, we must take every precaution, be patient with one another, and continue to make sacrifices for the greater good of all.

In the meantime, we continue to live the joy of the Resurrection. As I wrote in my Easter letter, the resurrection is not just a happy ending to a story. *“It is the promise of love which helps us pass this difficult road. This comforts us and gives us strength.”*

Let us continue to pray for the end of this pandemic, for those on the frontlines putting their lives on the line serving the needs of the sick, for those who have contracted this virus and for those who have lost their lives from it.

As you remain very present in my heart and prayers, I look forward to that day, coming soon, when we can literally gather around the altar of the Lord. Until then, may Our Mother, Mary of the Assumption, enfold us in her mantle of love and mercy.

Sincerely in the peace and joy of Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert D. Gruss". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross at the beginning.

Most Rev. Robert D. Gruss
Bishop of Saginaw