



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

May 2, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

On Friday May 1, I had the extraordinary privilege to reconsecrate our diocese to the Blessed Mother under the titles Mary Mother of the Church, Our Lady of Lourdes, and the Immaculate Heart of Mary. At the very time of the consecration, Governor Holcomb issued his “Back on Track” Roadmap to Safely Reopen Indiana.

What does this mean? We are planning for the eventual reopening of public liturgy, but we want to make sure we get this right, not rushed. I ask for your continued patience as we refine our guidelines – and patience when we implement them. For now, **our current liturgical protocols (including the suspension of the public celebration of the Mass) will remain in place while we review Governor Holcomb’s multistage plan.**

Our COVID19 Liturgy Task Force continues to examine appropriate ways to maintain access to the sacraments and safely reopen public worship. The Task Force will now revise its work considering the governor’s latest guidelines and present it to the College of Consultors (a consultative group comprised of pastors) for review. Following the review by the Consultors, we will present to all the priests of the diocese. Our pastors and parish leadership will need time to absorb the protocols and be prepared.

I will also communicate directly again with you, members of the faithful, so that you are aware of the broad outlines of our revised guidelines. I do want to prepare you for a few items that are clear from the latest public health and government guidelines. Although the Governor’s plan allows for indoor worship services to eventually convene, following specific social distancing guidelines, the strong preference is that places of worship continue to use **virtual services**. He further encouraged church leaders to ask those **65 and older, and those at elevated risk, to remain at home** until at least May 24.

Social distancing will be very new for us in our churches. For some time, we will likely be **wearing masks** and staying further apart than is our standard practice. Most parishes will likely have to **limit the number of people we allow into the church** for a given Mass. This will not be easy to absorb, but with a spirit of gratitude and patience, I have great confidence that we will get through these days.

The Holy Eucharist is the source and summit of the Catholic faith. In the Eucharist, we receive the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ. All of us deeply desire to return to our public celebration of the Mass, but we must do so in a manner that is responsible and within the context of the continuing health crisis.

Stay tuned for more updates next week. Please keep praying for all those suffering the effects of COVID19. Let us pray for the continued intercession of Our Lady of Lourdes during these days for healing, comfort, protection and wisdom.

Jesus, I trust in you...

Your Servant,
The Most Reverend Robert J. McClory
Bishop of Gary