



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP  
**DIOCESE OF WINONA-ROCHESTER**  
PASTORAL CENTER

---

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 (attached) 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

**The Most Reverend John M. Quinn**  
Bishop of Winona-Rochester  
55 West Sanborn Street | P.O. Box 588