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Diocese of Saint Cloud*

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May 10, 2021

Dear pastor,

Gov. Walz's most recent executive order eliminates most of the state's COVID-19 restrictions by May 28. In light of this order, I will be making significant changes to our diocese's pandemic protocols for parish events and liturgies that will take effect later this month. Please read this letter in its entirety and consider making it available to your parishioners via a pulpit announcement and/or in your Sunday bulletins.

First, I want to thank all of our clergy, parish and school staff, and parishioners who have abided by our protocols for over a year now. I firmly believe that adherence to these protocols prevented many more people from becoming ill and saved lives. We Catholics are called to protect life and care for our neighbors, and your willingness to follow our diocese's requirements have been a great witness to these teachings.

In light of the governor's announcement, these changes will be made to our diocesan protocols:

Effective May 23, the Solemnity of Pentecost (including vigil Masses on the evening of May 22), the following will be allowed:

- Holy water in stoups and fonts
- Altar servers holding the Roman Missal/Book and assisting with the lavabo
- Music: The four hymns (for the gathering, preparation of gifts, Communion and recessional) along with sequences
- Passing collection baskets
- Gift procession
- Sign of peace
- Communion under both species and on the tongue

Face coverings must still be worn at Mass and indoor parish events. The Sunday Mass obligation remains suspended until further notice.

Please remind parishioners to be sensitive to those in your parish who may choose to not yet come to Mass or participate in some aspects of the liturgy (e.g. handshaking at the sign of peace) because of health conditions or other concerns. Please make a special effort to ensure all feel welcomed and included during these times of ongoing transition.

Effective Friday, May 28:

- In line with the governor's executive order, all remaining capacity and physical-distancing limits will come to an end, including for Mass and other indoor parish events and gatherings.
- Parishes may resume funeral luncheons and wedding receptions as they are able. Food may once again be served at parish events.
- Festivals and similar parish celebrations may resume in their pre-pandemic forms.
- Face coverings are still required at all indoor events, including Mass. Masks are also required at outdoor events that exceed 500 people.

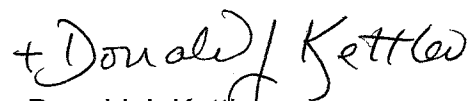
Effective Thursday, July 1:

- Face coverings will no longer be required at Mass and other events.

Although these restrictions are being removed at the diocesan level, pastors have the authority and my support to retain any of the current protocols past the dates listed above if they deem them to be in the interest of the health and safety of their parishioners. Catholic schools will continue to follow the protocols specific to them until the end of the school year.

As we continue to make progress against the coronavirus and our state returns to a degree of normalcy, I encourage you — if you haven't already — to receive one of the available COVID-19 vaccines and encourage your parishioners to do the same. The availability of the vaccine is a key reason we are able to take these steps in our state and our diocese, and our continued progress against the virus is contingent on as many people as possible receiving the vaccine.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



+Donald J. Kettler
Bishop, Diocese of Saint Cloud