



DIOCESE *of* GAYLORD

DIOCESE OF GAYLORD'S RESPONSE TO COVID-19 2020 Archive

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If one were to choose not to be vaccinated, one would have a moral responsibility to embrace the necessary precautions to avoid spreading the disease to others.

At this same time, we join our voices to call for the development of vaccines that have no connection to abortion. Our consciences must not be dulled, nor may we imply in any way that abortion is acceptable.

Let us implore the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, that God may bring an end to the pandemic and that all esteem and respect the dignity of human life.

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Most Reverend Allen H. Vigneron
Archbishop of Detroit

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Most Reverend Paul J. Bradley
Bishop of Kalamazoo

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Most Reverend Earl A. Boyea
Bishop of Lansing

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Most Reverend John F. Doerfler
Bishop of Marquette

+ 

Most Reverend Robert D. Gruss
Bishop of Saginaw

+ 

Most Reverend Walter A. Hurley
Apostolic Administrator
Diocese of Gaylord

+ 

Most Reverend David J. Walkowiak
Bishop of Grand Rapids



18 de diciembre de 2020

Queridos hermanos y hermanas en Cristo:

¡La paz sea con ustedes!

En estos días de Adviento de preparación para la venida de nuestro Señor, esperamos y oramos para que el Príncipe de la Paz los consuele y los acerque hacia él. Durante el presente año las luchas con la pandemia global del COVID-19 han pesado gravemente en nuestros corazones, sin embargo, nuestro Señor ha estado con nosotros para profundizar nuestra fe y confianza en él. Conoce de nuestras oraciones por ti y por todos los trabajadores de la salud que tan diligentemente cuidan de quienes están enfermos.

A medida que las vacunas para el COVID-19 empiezan a estar disponibles, queremos hablar de las cuestiones morales que han ido surgiendo, en la medida en que algunas vacunas se desarrollan usando líneas de células que se han originado a partir del tejido tomado de bebés que fueron abortados hace décadas.¹ El aborto es un mal grave, y debemos evitar la complicidad en el aborto. Oremos por la paz, la sanación y la misericordia de Dios por todas aquellas personas que han abortado.

En el momento de escribir este comunicado, la Administración de Alimentos y Medicamentos (FDA) ha dado su aprobación para el uso de emergencia de la vacuna contra el COVID-19 que desarrolló la compañía Pfizer. Dos otras vacunas, una desarrollada por la compañía Moderna y la otra por la compañía AstraZeneca, también podrían obtener la aprobación de la FDA.²

Está moralmente permitido recibir las vacunas desarrolladas por Pfizer y Moderna. Ninguna de esas vacunas ha usado en su diseño, desarrollo o producción líneas celulares originadas en tejidos tomados de bebés abortados. Sin embargo, tanto la vacuna de Pfizer como la de Moderna usaron esa línea celular en las pruebas de confirmación. No obstante, esta conexión con el aborto es muy remota, y es importante tener en cuenta que hay varios niveles de responsabilidad. Una mayor responsabilidad moral recae en los investigadores que en quienes reciben la vacuna. La Congregación para la Doctrina de la Fe ha expresado que es moralmente permisible ser vacunado si no hay alternativas y hay serios riesgos para la salud.³ Esos riesgos graves para la salud están presentes debido a la actual pandemia.

Sin embargo, la vacuna desarrollada por AstraZeneca es más problemática desde el punto de vista moral, pues en su diseño, producción, desarrollo y pruebas de confirmación sí usó una línea celular que se originó a partir de tejido tomado de un bebé abortado. Esta vacuna sólo puede recibirse si no hay otras alternativas. Se permitiría aceptar la vacuna de AstraZeneca solo si uno no puede elegir otra vacuna y un retraso en la vacunación puede ocasionar consecuencias graves para la salud de uno mismo y de los demás. Su

¹ Para más información acerca de la moralidad de las vacunas en contra del COVID-19, véase la declaración conjunta de los presidentes del Comité de Doctrina y Actividades Pro-Vida de la Conferencia de Obispos Católicos Estadounidenses (USCCB) en la que se basa nuestra declaración: [moral-considerations-covid-vaccines \(usccb.org\)](https://www.usccb.org/moral-considerations-covid-vaccines)

² Para más información acerca de las vacunas específicas que se están desarrollando para el COVID-19 vea esta tabla de referencia de Charlotte Lozier Institute: [COVID-19-Vaccine-Candidates-and-Abortion-Derived-Cell-Lines.pdf \(lozierinstitute.org\)](https://www.lozierinstitute.org/COVID-19-Vaccine-Candidates-and-Abortion-Derived-Cell-Lines.pdf)

³ Congregación para la Doctrina de la Fe, Instrucción sobre algunas cuestiones de bioética (Dignitas Personae) (2008), núms. 35-36: [Instruction Dignitas Personae on Certain Bioethical Questions, Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith \(vatican.va\)](https://www.vatican.va/holy-father/franconi/instructions/20080529_instruction_dignitas-personae_sp.html)

⁴ Pontificia Academia para la Vida, "Moral Reflections on Vaccines Prepared from Cells Derived from Aborted Human Foetuses," (9 de junio de 2005) en National Catholic Bioethics Quarterly 6:3 (2006): 541-49



DATE: November 17, 2020
TO: Priests, Pastoral Administrators, Deacons, Seminarians, Diocesan Staff
FROM: Karina Bak, Director of Human Resources
Beth Hicks, Director for Worship and Liturgical Formation
RE: **Updated Guidelines for Regarding MDHHS Emergency Order MCL 333.2253**

On November 15, Michigan's Department of Health and Human Services issued an updated [Emergency Order](#) that impacts all regions in Michigan. **The following updates are effective November 18 through December 8:**

Liturgical Gatherings

Further guidance for liturgical gatherings will be forthcoming, however the current protocols for all liturgies remain in place, particularly the requirements for all to wear a mask; social distancing; proper sanitization of the parish; and capacity must not exceed the number of persons that can safely be accommodated while maintaining social distancing. Of note, **Funeral Masses** in our parish churches may also continue to take place in the same manner, so long as the protocols for liturgical celebrations remain in place.

Schools

Our diocesan Office of Catholic Schools published guidelines which can be found on the [diocesan website](#). In summary: preschool, elementary and middle school classes will continue in-person, and High School classes will transition to virtual learning November 18 through December 8. Extracurriculars and school-sponsored sports for all grade levels are immediately suspended, and there will be no athletic practices or competitions until the order expires. After School Care will continue to be offered while school is in session.

Faith Formation

Faith Formation in our parishes should continue to follow our diocesan school guidelines. With this in mind, preschool, elementary and middle school Faith Formation will continue in-person. Adult classes and High School classes and activities (youth group, etc.) will take place online beginning November 18. Fr. Nicholas Cooper, Interim Director of Faith Formation, will be sending an additional message to Faith Formation leaders in this regard.

Non-Liturgical Gatherings

With the exception of parish Faith Formation, **indoor gatherings are not permitted** during this time. These indoor gatherings would include meetings (parish and outside groups); fundraisers, such as craft shows; fellowship and meals; or use of the parish hall for family reunions, etc. *Outdoor* gatherings are permitted with capacity limitations, which can be found on the [MDHHS website](#).

If you have any questions, please contact:

- Karina Bak at kbak@dioceseofgaylord.org or 989-705-3511 / 989-619-8468
- Beth Hicks at bhicks@dioceseofgaylord.org or 989-705-3519 / 989-619-8553

producción es algo similar a la vacuna contra la rubéola, que la Academia Pontificia para la Vida indicó que podría recibirse por razones graves y si no hay otras alternativas.⁴

Si uno decidiera no vacunarse, tendría la responsabilidad moral de adoptar las precauciones necesarias para evitar la propagación de la enfermedad a otros.

Al mismo tiempo, unimos nuestras voces para pedir el desarrollo de vacunas que no tengan conexión con el aborto. Nuestras conciencias no deben entorpecerse, ni por ninguna manera debemos insinuar que el aborto es aceptable.

Imploremos la intercesión de la Bienaventurada Virgen María, para que Dios ponga fin a la pandemia y que todos estimen y respeten la dignidad de la vida humana.



Excelentísimo Allen H. Vigneron
Arzobispo de Detroit



Excelentísimo Paul J. Bradley
Obispo de Kalamazoo



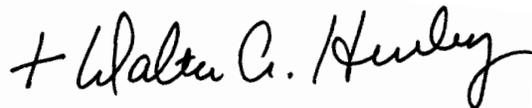
Excelentísimo Earl A. Boyea
Obispo de Lansing



Excelentísimo John F. Doerfler
Obispo de Marquette



Excelentísimo Robert D. Gruss
Obispo de Saginaw



Excelentísimo Walter A. Hurley
Administrador Apostólico
Diócesis de Gaylord



Excelentísimo David J. Walkowiak
Obispo de Grand Rapids



November 17, 2020
St. Elizabeth of Hungary

Dear Directors of Religious Education, Catechists and Youth Group Leaders:

First, I would like to personally thank each and every one of you for your steadfastness in teaching our students in the faith of Jesus Christ. What you do on a daily basis is one of the greatest missions of Holy Mother Church. You are helping to educate the next generation in an era of uncertainty. During the past several months, I have been reminded of the early church as they left Jerusalem to various parts of the Earth. Christ ascended to the Father, and he left his church in the care of twelve men. The apostles went out into the world with an encounter with the Risen Lord. They had none of the writing of Sts. Peter, Paul, Clement, or Augustine, nor did they have the Catechism of the Catholic Church — they had an encounter with the Risen Lord, and they went off evangelizing. We have more resources available through various mediums than they could have ever imagined. I have talked with various directors from around the diocese, and I am utterly amazed at your dedication to our students through this entire pandemic. Keep going strong, we need you ... the priests need you, Christ needs you!

Second, with the Michigan's Department of Health and Human Services updated [Emergency Order](#), issued on Sunday, November 15, I would like to address Faith Formation policies for the diocese. All Faith Formation policies are to follow the [school guidelines published through the diocesan Office of Catholic Schools](#). Applicable to Faith Formation, a summary includes:

- **Preschool, elementary, and middle school Faith Formation classes will continue in-person.** With this in mind, the following guidelines must continue to be put in place for in-person faith formation for these students:
 - All volunteers should self-monitor for symptoms of COVID-19. If symptoms are present, they should not attend in person.
 - Parents should monitor their children for symptoms of COVID-19. If symptoms are present, children should not attend in person.
 - Drop-off and pick-up procedures need to be established in order to maintain social distancing.
 - Each student needs to provide his/her own supplies. The parish should help those parents who cannot provide these supplies for their children.
 - Social distancing (maintaining six feet) must be observed while having in-person classes.
 - Masks must be worn. Parishes must provide masks for those who do not have one.
 - Hand sanitizer must be provided.
 - All surfaces must be sanitized after every class.
- **High School Faith Formation classes will take place online beginning November 18.** High school youth group meetings and other gatherings should also be held virtually beginning on Wednesday.
- **Adult Faith Formation classes will take place online beginning November 18.**

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me; I am more than happy to help in any way that I can. You are all an inspiration. Please pray for me and I will pray for you all.

In Our Lady of Perpetual Help,

Rev. Nicholas J. Cooper

Interim Director of Faith Formation

ncooper@dioceseofgaylord.org / 989-705-3570



DATE: November 16, 2020
TO: Priests, Pastoral Administrators, Deacons, Principals, Diocesan Staff
FROM: Office of Communications
RE: **Impact of Nov. 15 Emergency Order on our Catholic Schools**

The diocesan Office of Catholic Schools has shared the following sample letter with principals for use when communicating with parents regarding the most recent [Executive Orders from the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services](#). Principals and school communicators, please feel free to use all or part of the following sample letter. With any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact our Office of Catholic Schools.

SAMPLE LETTER

Dear faculty, staff, and families,

On Sunday evening, November 15, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services issued a [Gatherings and Face Mask Order \(PDF\)](#) that impacts our schools. It calls for all high schools to move to online learning beginning November 18 and continuing through December 8. It also increases the limits on indoor and outdoor gatherings, which impacts extracurriculars, and has resulted in an immediate (effective today) cessation of sports.

While we are still working through all the ramifications of this sudden announcement, here is what we know right now:

- Our preschool, elementary, and middle school classes will **continue in-person**. Per the State website: “Michigan has seen fewer outbreaks of COVID-19 associated with elementary and middle schools and younger children are most in need of in-person instruction.”
- Beginning Wednesday morning, as mandated by the Order, **High School classes will take place online**. High school students will attend school in-person tomorrow, November 17, and bring locker items home. Students who cannot attend on Tuesday [Nov 17] may pick up materials on Wednesday [Nov 18] during school hours or make alternate arrangements. We plan to resume in-person instruction at our high school on December 9. Details regarding online learning will come directly from the high school.
- **School-sponsored sports for all grade levels are immediately suspended**. There will be no practices or competitions for athletes until the order expires. Per the MHSAA: “We will assess everything over the next three weeks relative to fall and winter sports and come up with a plan that keeps us connected to our goal, for months, of having three seasons that are played to their conclusions.”
- Extracurriculars for all grade levels will be canceled beginning Wednesday, November 18. If you are not sure about a particular activity, please contact the activity coordinator or advisor.
- **After School Care will continue** to be offered while school is in session.
- If you participate in a non-school-sponsored activity that takes place at one of our facilities, please check with the organizers to determine whether it is affected by this recent order.
- Students may continue to receive a free school lunch on those days when COVID prevents students from dining at school. The recent order increases the number of days on which this is available. Please contact food service to let them know of your desire to obtain a free lunch for your student(s).
- See the Michigan.gov website for further details on the order.



Extending the Dispensation
“Sperabamus ... we used to hope ...”
November 9, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

In early March, and again in August, the dispensation from the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation was granted in the Diocese of Gaylord in view of the pandemic that engulfed our state, country and world. The latter extension expires November 22, 2020. We had hoped that by that time, things would return to normal and all could safely return to our celebrations of the Eucharist.

Sadly, that hope is not being realized, and we continue to find ourselves not in a diminishment of cases, but in an increase here in Michigan and our own area. People continue to be at risk. Some are fearful, and many for good reason. While most of our churches have observed the required protocols for safety, such as wearing masks, not all have done so, placing others at risk. If safe distancing is maintained in the diocese, many of our churches would be unable to accommodate all.

Considering these and other factors, **I am extending the dispensation from the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of obligation for the people in the Diocese of Gaylord until further notice.** I do so that anyone who needs to stay at home to protect the common good, themselves and others can do so in good conscience. In the meantime, we will continue to monitor the situation and make a determination when we can safely return to our “normal” patterns of worship. A day we all look forward to.

The granting of this dispensation is not meant to be a reason to absent oneself from Mass. Without a dispensation, many would be excused from this obligation because of age, health or other family situations or issues. Conscience will always need to be our guide. If you are able to do so, I invite you to come back to the parish celebrations. Whether we are able to attend or not, we all have a serious obligation to “Keep holy the sabbath day.” If you are not able to attend Mass, I ask that you set aside time for prayer, not only everyday but especially on Sunday. While not a substitute for Mass attendance, the various “virtual Masses” can be useful in focusing our prayer and our union with all our brothers and sisters. The recitation of the rosary, other devotions, visits to the Blessed Sacrament at the church or chapel, and Scripture or other reading can all be helpful.

As we continue through these difficult and challenging times, let us always be mindful the Lord is walking with us and speaks to tell us, “Do not be afraid.” Let us also commend ourselves and our local church to the love and care of Mary, Our Lady of Mount Carmel, the patroness of our diocese.

Sperabamus ... we used to hope ... and now we do, because God has come and made His dwelling with us.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Walter A. Hurley
Apostolic Administrator



October 30, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

I thank you for your sustained concern for the well-being of all who enter our churches during this pandemic, which has continued far beyond what anyone could have anticipated, and I suspect will continue for the near foreseeable future. You continue to make great sacrifices and remain flexible with the ever-changing situation, and I am grateful.

Out of charity for one another, we must not slow down in our safety practices or become weary with these measures, as out of the ordinary as they may be. With Advent and Christmas approaching, it is critical that we remain diligent in safeguarding those in our parishes to the extent that we are able.

I understand that you may have questions regarding Michigan's Department of Health and Human Services Epidemic Order, issued yesterday (Oct. 29), and that questions continue to surface regarding the proper procedures in the event of a positive test result or possible exposure within your parish or parish staff. The enclosures are meant to assist you with these questions as you continue to navigate the daily operation of your parish.

Additionally, further information will be forthcoming next week regarding any changes to the protocols for our worship and liturgy; our Advent and Christmas liturgical celebrations; and the possible extension of the general dispensation. Please "stay tuned" for such an update in the near future.

While it is possible to feel weighed down with such safety considerations, I find it helpful to remember that physical health and spiritual vitality are both of great consequence. I remain grateful for your concern for the physical well-being of your people, as well as the matters of eternal significance. It is my hope that we can keep everyone safe, and at the same time, continue to prioritize their spiritual care and direction during these times when it is needed most.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Walter A. Hurley
Apostolic Administrator

Enclosures:

1. *Updated Guidelines for Non-Liturgical Parish Activities*
2. *COVID-19 Procedures if a Parish Staff Member Tests Positive or has Potential Exposure*



DATE: October 30, 2020
TO: Priests, Pastoral Administrators, Deacons, Seminarians, Diocesan Staff
FROM: Karina Bak, Director of Human Resources
RE: **Updated Guidelines for Non-Liturgical Parish Activities**

On Thursday, October 29, Michigan's Department of Health and Human Services issued an updated [Epidemic Order](#) that impacts all regions in the State of Michigan. The following updates to our earlier guidelines for non-liturgical parish activities (Oct. 1) are effective immediately. These modifications to earlier guidelines can be found in red text for quick reference:

1. Social distancing (six feet) must be practiced.
2. Facial coverings are required to be worn by all. **If masks are not worn, these parish activities should not take place.**
3. Regular venue sanitization protocols must be continued.
4. The following indoor capacity restrictions must be maintained in all parishes in the diocese:
 - A. Indoor events of fewer than 500:
 - In venues *with* fixed seating, limit attendance to **20% seating capacity**.
 - In venues *without* fixed seating, **no more than 50 people should be gathered** and attendance is limited to **20 people** per 1,000 sq. ft. of each room within the venue space.
 - B. Indoor events of 500 or more are not permitted.
 - C. **Only six people are permitted at each table for indoor gatherings.**
5. The following outdoor capacity restrictions must be maintained in all parishes in the diocese:
 - A. Outdoor events of fewer than 1,000:
 - In a venue *with* fixed seating, limit attendance to 30% seating capacity.
 - In venues *without* fixed seating, limit attendance to no more than 30 people per 1,000 sq. ft. of any distinct area within the event space.
 - B. Outdoor events of more than 1,000 are not permitted.
6. **Contact tracing must be achievable with any non-liturgical parish gathering, and it is strongly encouraged that parishes do not allow gatherings of outside groups in their spaces at this time. (Considering the anonymous nature of certain groups, parishes are responsible for ensuring that contact tracing can take place if these meetings must be held.)**

If you have any questions, please contact me at kbak@dioceseofgaylord.org or 989-705-3511 / 989-619-8468.



DATE: October 30, 2020
TO: Priests, Pastoral Administrators, Deacons, Seminarians, Diocesan Staff
FROM: Karina Bak, Director of Human Resources;
Beth Hicks, Director for Worship and Liturgical Formation
RE: **COVID-19 Procedures if a Parish Staff Member Tests Positive or has Potential Exposure**

To assist parish staffs in the event of a positive COVID-19 test result within the staff (including the pastor) or in the event that a staff person is quarantining due to potential exposure, the following guidelines are provided to aid in the facilitation of safe management of the situation:

1. **If you have been in close contact* with someone who has tested positive:** You should self-quarantine away from others for 14 days since the last day you had contact with that person. Your employer should contact you with further instructions. It is possible that your local health department will call you to discuss your risk; you can also reach out to your local health department. If you develop symptoms of respiratory illness, and are concerned about your health, please call your healthcare provider. **Close contact is currently defined as being within 6 feet, for cumulative 15 minutes, over a 24 hour period.*
2. **If your coworker (or someone you have had close contact with) is quarantining because of their possible exposure:** You should monitor yourself for symptoms of respiratory illness and remember to practice good social distancing, but quarantine is not required. You should follow any instructions from your employer carefully. If you develop any symptoms, you should self-isolate at home and contact a healthcare provider if you are concerned about your health. Remember to follow appropriate precautions for cleaning your work area, hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette.
3. Parishes must perform enhanced cleaning of all areas after learning that someone has tested positive and has been in the space.
4. Masses may continue to be held if a substitute priest is available and there is someone available to assist with all the necessary set-up before and clean-up after Mass.
5. Provide a general (no names, no specifics) communication to the parish if someone tests positive and has been in the space. This helps with rumor control and misinformation.

If you have any questions, please contact:

- Karina Bak at kbak@dioceseofgaylord.org or 989-705-3511 / 989-619-8468
- Beth Hicks at bhicks@dioceseofgaylord.org or 989-705-3519 / 989-619-8553



DATE: October 13, 2020

TO: Priests, Pastoral Administrators, Deacons, Seminarians

FROM: Most Reverend Walter A. Hurley *+ Walter A. Hurley*

RE: **Modifications to COVID-19 Protocols for Liturgical Celebrations**

Modifications to COVID-19 Protocols for Liturgical Celebrations

In these challenging times, we are committed to keeping our people safe and at the same time maintaining the best (near normal) liturgical practices that are possible under these circumstances. We have had several months with certain protocols in place; I want to thank the parishes that have taken these protocols and observed them carefully and seriously. I must admit that I find it troublesome that some very small number refuse to wear masks and place everyone at risk. I know that some of the parishes have been very strict on the issue of wearing masks, and I commend you for your care and concern for all the people.

Effective immediately, you may begin to make the following modifications to parish liturgical protocols.

Capacity:

With the winter months coming up, where it is possible to do so, our pastors are allowed to admit the number they can safely accommodate while maintaining the required sanitizing; social distancing (six feet minimum); and the required use of face masks. This number is determined by the seating capacity of the church and is no longer limited to the previous 25% capacity. Due to church size, this means that there will continue to be occupancy restrictions in some parishes. This modification presumes high touch surfaces are being disinfected after each liturgy and that hand sanitizers are available and used by all.

Music:

The absence of music has been a burden for many, and we are making these modifications to the present protocols to gradually resume our normal liturgical practices. Effective immediately — with the continued expectation that all in the congregation will wear a face covering — the proper parts of the Mass may be sung by all: Psalm response; Alleluia Verse; the Holy Holy; Eucharistic Acclamation; and Lamb of God.

The Gloria, Creed and Our Father should *not* be sung. A cantor or other singer may sing a hymn or special music at other places in the liturgy.

Communion Distribution:

As much as possible, we should return to the usual practice of people coming forward to receive Communion (observing social distancing of at least six feet). Markings can be placed on the floor as needed. This practice is already used in many parishes in the diocese. Some parishes will be limited by narrow aisles and pew layout. Only where this is the case and social distancing cannot be maintained should the ministers go between the pews to distribute the Eucharist. The practice of distributing Communion after Mass and as people are leaving the church should be discontinued and returned to its proper place within the liturgy.

The Presentation of Gifts:

The presentation of wine and hosts may resume during the Offertory. The members of the assembly who will present the gifts are to be wearing masks and must sanitize their hands before picking up the vessels and after presenting them.

Mass Servers:

Using appropriate safety measures, hand sanitizers and masks in procession, a limited use of Mass servers is permitted. They should not hold the Missal for the Collect or Prayer after Communion (a stand for the Missal or Excerpts from the Roman Missal can be placed in front of the presider's chair). They may assist by carrying the cross and candles in the entrance procession and recessional. They may assist in setting the altar with proper sanitizing of hands. They may participate in a simple Gospel procession with candles.

An entrance procession and recession to greet people can be resumed with the required masks for priest, etc. in these processions.

After Mass:

People should be asked to exit row by row to the degree that is possible to keep the appropriate social distancing requirements and not gather after Mass for visiting.

A caution: As you know, things are constantly changing. In the event of changing circumstances, we remain flexible in the case that we have to return to a more restricted approach again in the future.

It is our hope that these modifications will help to bolster people's hope and feelings of joy as a worshipping community, and at the same time keep safe. Let us pray for each other and those whose lives have been lost or affected by this virus as we journey through this time of uncertainty.



DATE: October 3, 2020

TO: Pastors, Priests, Pastoral Administrators, Parishes, Prinsipals, Deacons

FROM: Most Reverend Walter A. Hurley *+ Walter A. Hurley*

RE: MI Supreme Court Decision Regarding Emergency Powers of Governor Gretchen Whitmer

**Michigan Supreme Court Decision Regarding
Emergency Powers of Governor Gretchen Whitmer**

We are aware of the recent decision of the Michigan Supreme Court regarding the emergency powers of Governor Gretchen Whitmer.

The current safety precautions and protocols for schools and parishes that have been issued by the diocese are issued based on the authority of the Bishop, taking into account expert advice from the medical community. Therefore, these safety precautions and protocols are not affected by this decision of the Supreme Court regarding the authority of the Governor and remain in place until they are reviewed and, if appropriate, modified by the diocese.

Your cooperation and compliance in this regard is deeply appreciated.



DATE: October 1, 2020
TO: Priests, Pastoral Administrators, Deacons, Seminarians, Diocesan Staff
FROM: Karina Bak, Director of Human Resources
RE: Guidelines for Non-Liturgical Parish Activities

Guidelines for Non-Liturgical Parish Activities

With regard to the State of Michigan Executive Order [2020-183](#), the following guidelines for non-liturgical parish activities will take effect on Friday, October 9, 2020:

1. Practice social distancing (six feet).
2. Require facial coverings to be worn.
3. Maintain regular venue sanitization protocols.
4. Maintain the following **indoor** capacity restrictions:
 - Region 4** (Alcona, Iosco, Ogemaw, and Oscoda counties)
 - A. Indoor events of 10 or fewer are permitted.
 - B. Indoor events of more than 10 but fewer than 500:
 - In venues *with* fixed seating, limit attendance to 20% seating capacity.
 - In venues *without* fixed seating, limit attendance to 20 people per 1,000 sq. ft. of each room within the venue space.
 - C. Indoor events of 500 or more are not permitted.
 - Region 6** (All remaining counties in the Diocese of Gaylord)
 - A. Indoor events of 10 or fewer are permitted.
 - B. Indoor events of more than 10 but fewer than 500:
 - In venues *with* fixed seating, limit attendance to 25% seating capacity.
 - In venues *without* fixed seating, limit attendance to 25 people per 1,000 sq. ft. of each room within the venue space.
 - C. Indoor events of 500 or more are not permitted.
5. Maintain the following **outdoor** capacity restrictions:
 - A. Outdoor events of 100 people or fewer are permitted.
 - B. Outdoor events of more than 100 but fewer than 1,000:
 - In a venue *with* fixed seating, limit attendance to 30% seating capacity.
 - In venues *without* fixed seating, limit attendance to no more than 30 people per 1,000 sq. ft. of any distinct area within the event space.
 - C. Outdoor events of more than 1,000 are not permitted.

If you have any questions, please contact me at kbak@dioceseofgaylord.org or 989-705-3511 / 989-619-8468.



DATE: August 21, 2020

TO: Priests, Pastoral Administrators, Deacons

FROM: Most Reverend Walter A. Hurley *+ Walter C. Hurley*

RE: Experiencing Symptoms of COVID-19 — A Reminder

Experiencing Symptoms of COVID-19 — A Reminder

While this material was sent to you earlier, it seems appropriate with the schools and parishes now open to remind you of the following protocols should you think you have been exposed to COVID-19.

The following steps have been outlined for us by the Health Department of Northwest Michigan. These steps should be taken in the event you experience symptoms of COVID-19 or have tested positive for the virus:

1. Get tested immediately if you experience symptoms of COVID-19. Stay home if you are not feeling well while you wait for your results.
2. If you have tested positive:
 - a. The church and other areas you have been in, such as the parish offices, are to undergo a deep cleaning.
 - b. Following that, churches may remain open and Masses continue with cleaning being done between each Mass as outlined in the protocols for Mass.
 - c. With a positive testing, the health department will contact you to help identify people who have been within six feet of you for a period of time longer than 15 minutes. Those people need to be contacted and made aware of the situation. Only those people are at a higher risk of infection.
 - d. Send a general communication to the parishioners informing them that a member of the community has tested positive. The health department in your area can assist you with the script to use.

The list on page two outlines contacts in your area that should be contacted if you have tested positive for the virus. These contacts will also assist you with any other questions you may have, so do not hesitate to reach out to them.

- More -

Health Department	Counties	Website	Health Officer
Health Department of Northwest Michigan	Antrim, Charlevoix, Emmet, Otsego	www.nwhealth.org	Lisa Peacock l.peacock@nwhealth.org 231-633-1705
Benzie Leelanau District Health Department	Benzie, Leelanau	www.bldhd.org	Lisa Peacock l.peacock@nwhealth.org 231-633-1705
Grand Traverse County Health Department	Grand Traverse	www.gtchd.org	Wendy Hirschenberger whirsch@gtchd.org 231-995-6100
District Health Department #4	Alpena, Cheboygan, Montmorency, Presque Isle	www.dhd4.org	Denise Bryan dbryan@dhd4.org 989-387-1836
District Health Department #2	Alcona, Iosco, Ogemaw, Oscoda	www.dhd2.org	Denise Bryan dbryan@dhd4.org 989-387-1836
Central Michigan District Health Department	Arenac, Clare, Gladwin, Isabella, Osceola, Roscommon	www.cmdhd.org	Steve Hall shall@cmdhd.org 989-773-5921, Ext. 1421
District Health Department #10	Crawford, Kalkaska, Lake, Manistee, Mason, Mecosta, Missaukee, Newaygo, Oceana, Wexford	www.dhd10.org	Kevin Hughes khughes@dhd10.org 231-876-3839

- For more information from the Health Department of Northwest Michigan*, please visit: <http://nwhealth.org/covid19.html>
- For resources for faith-based organizations from the Centers for Disease Control, please visit: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/index.html>

*Each of the health departments have similar references on their websites as well.



DIocese OF GAYLORD

611 WEST NORTH STREET
GAYLORD, MI 49735
PHONE: 989.732.5147
FAX: 989.705.3589

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
AUGUST 17, 2020

SUNDAY MASS DISPENSATION EXTENDED

GAYLORD, MICHIGAN — Bishop Walter Hurley, Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Gaylord, has announced the extension of the dispensation for all Catholics within the Diocese of Gaylord from the obligation of attending Sunday Mass through and including the feast of Christ the King, Sunday, November 22, 2020. The granting of this dispensation is not to discourage those who are able to attend Sunday Mass from doing so, but rather to enable so that anyone who needs to stay at home to protect the common good (their own or that of others) can do so confidently and in good conscience.

The protocols for Mass that have been established during this pandemic for the well-being and safety of all remain in place for parishes within the Diocese of Gaylord, namely: the required use of masks; limited singing; social distancing; cleansing of the churches according to CDC guidelines; as well as a congregation that does not exceed 25% of the capacity of the church.

“All are asked to carefully observe these protocols because we care for each other and love each other as the Lord has called us to,” said Bishop Hurley. “The celebration of the Eucharist/Sunday Mass should be at the very core of our faith life, and we are all called to keep holy the Lord’s day. We must each seek to find time for prayer and spiritual Communion with the Lord, even if we cannot be present for the celebration of Eucharist.

“Please continue to pray with me for consolation and relief from the pandemic. May we look forward to the First Sunday of Advent, on November 29, with fervent hope that we may be able to return to Mass together at that time.”

- END -

The Diocese of Gaylord was established by His Holiness Pope Paul VI on July 20, 1971. The territory encompasses 11,171 square miles and includes the 21 most northern counties of Michigan’s Lower Peninsula. The region is home to nearly 50,000 Catholics, served by 75 parishes, 17 Catholic schools and many closely-related institutions. For more information, visit www.dioceseofgaylord.org.

Keywords: Roman Catholic Church, Diocese of Gaylord, Dispensation Extension

Media Contact: Mrs. Mackenzie Ritchie, Director of Communications / mritchie@dioceseofgaylord.org / 989.705.3506



DIOCESE OF GAYLORD

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August 12, 2020

Dear Priests, Pastoral Administrators, Directors of Parish Religious Education, and Principals:

One of the great missions of the Church is the work of evangelization, especially to children and youth. During this unprecedented pandemic, we must use this time wisely to help our young people strengthen their faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Thank you for the work that you are doing and for your continued efforts, as you are truly on the front lines of teaching and your work is extremely important to the mission of the Church! We must continue walking alongside our young people in this journey, as we are a family – and a family helps each other grow in the faith. During this time, parents may be fearful of sending their children to faith formation, and even sacramental preparation, and they will need the faith *brought to them* in new and creative ways.

Bearing this in mind, please find below the **guidelines for parish religious education**:

CURRICULUM

- Any material on the USCCB's [Conformity Listing of Catechetical Texts and Series](#) can be used for faith formation and all sacramental preparation, including marriage preparation.
- The diocese must approve all other material not on the Conformity Listing before being used.
- All materials (i.e. books and online resources) are to be ordered by the parish. **Please note:** Material orders that have been placed, to date, utilizing the "2021 Parish Ordering Booklet" will be coordinated/fulfilled by the diocesan staff. For orders that have not yet been placed, materials should be ordered by the parish.
- Teaching methods should be adapted to assist parents with at-home teaching.

SCREENING AND SOCIAL DISTANCING

Classes may be held in person if the following guidelines are put in place:

- All volunteers should self-monitor for symptoms of COVID-19. If symptoms are present, they should not attend in person.
- Parents should monitor their children for symptoms of COVID-19. If symptoms are present, children should not attend in person.
- Drop-off and pick-up procedures need to be established in order to maintain social distancing.
- Each student needs to provide his/her own supplies. The parish should help those parents who cannot provide these supplies for their children.
- Social distancing (maintaining six feet) must be observed while having in-person classes.
- Masks must be worn while in the hallways. Parishes must provide masks for those who do not have one.
- Hand sanitizer must be provided.
- If necessary, multiple classes may need to be offered each week to ensure that classroom size does not exceed the 10 person capacity. **Please note:** School guidelines fall in a different classification in the Executive Orders.
- All surfaces must be sanitized after every class.

Again, I applaud you in your work of evangelization during this time. I remain in prayer with you all.

In Our Lady of Perpetual Help,

Rev. Nicholas J. Cooper
Interim Director of Faith Formation



CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

**RETURN TO SCHOOL
COVID-19
PREPAREDNESS
PLAN**

Dated: July 31, 2020



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NOTE FROM THE OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

Since 1971 in the Diocese of Gaylord, a Christ centered, faith-filled education has been made available to families who desire that their children be raised in the Catholic faith. In the midst of a global pandemic that has also impacted our Northern Michigan region, our teachers and administrators have been presented with unique challenges in fulfilling that mission. For our students, being out of school and separated from friends and teachers has been difficult. For teachers, not being able to instruct in person has been unsatisfying. For parents, trying to be both parent and teacher has been sometimes rewarding, sometimes frustrating. However, these challenges also provide an opportunity to once again embrace Catholic Schools as an attractive educational option for families in Northern Michigan.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops stated, *"We must provide young people with an academically rigorous and doctrinally sound program of education and faith formation designed to strengthen their union with Christ and his Church. Catholic schools collaborate with parents and guardians in raising and forming their children as families struggle with the changing and challenging cultural and moral contexts in which they find themselves. Catholic schools provide young people with sound Church teaching through a broad-based curriculum, where faith and culture are intertwined in all areas of a school's life."* – USCCB website (Catholic Schools on the Threshold, No.9). Even with the challenges of these shifting cultural norms, as well as what the Coronavirus pandemic has brought upon us, our parents can be assured that their Catholic schools will continue to provide a safe and welcoming environment for their children that also continues to be academically sound, Christ centered, and service oriented.

In mid-June the Governor announced that schools in Michigan would be allowed to open again in the fall to in-person learning. Then on June 30th, the Governor introduced the Michigan Return-to-School Roadmap, a document put together by educators, health care providers, and leaders from around the state of Michigan to provide guidance to schools in these re-opening efforts. The recommendations are based on the area of the state we are located in related to the community spread of Coronavirus. Most schools in the Diocese are currently in Phase 5, which means all suggested protocols from the state are either recommended or strongly recommended. Phase 4 schools are required to follow the State's recommendations. Regional schools in our area that fall into that phase are Holy Family School in East Tawas and St. Joseph in West Branch.

In planning for our return to school, the Diocesan Office of Schools is referencing the Michigan Safe Start recommendations from the Governor's office and are continually reviewing any updated information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). This document presents some of the overarching principles under which we will be re-opening our schools and precautions to be taken to maintain this safe environment for our students and staff.

School administrations are required to develop re-entry plans for returning to school. These plans will need to incorporate scenarios in which they are 1) successful in being able to return person-to-person, 2) a response in case they need to return to distance learning instruction only, or 3) a hybrid of both. These plans must be submitted to the local governing body (here at the Diocese) then to the Michigan Department of Education by August 15th.

As we return to school, we pray for our students and families by turning to the patron saint of children, St. Nicholas of Myra, in prayer, *"God, we pray that through the intercessions of St. Nicholas you will guide our children. Keep them safe from all harm and help them grow to become loving disciples of Jesus in your sight. Give them strength to always mature into deeper faith in Jesus, and to keep alive joy in your creation. Through Jesus Christ Our Lord, Amen!"*

Sincerely,



Frank Sander
Superintendent of Catholic Schools

RETURN TO SCHOOL TASK FORCE

CHAIR, FRANK SANDER, SUPERINTENDENT OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS, DIOCESE OF GAYLORD

Matt Bauman, Curriculum Director, Grand Traverse Area Catholic Schools, Traverse City; Curriculum Consultant, Diocese of Gaylord Office of Catholic Schools

Chase Closs, Middle School Teacher, Assistant Principal, Bishop Baraga Catholic School, Cheboygan

Penny Clemens, Principal, St. Joseph Catholic School, West Branch

Adam Dobrowolski, Principal, St. Francis Xavier Catholic School, Petoskey

Kathleen Dvoracek, Principal, St. Mary Catholic School, Charlevoix

Heather Glasby, Teacher, Assistant Principal, St. Mary Cathedral School, Gaylord

Megan Glynn, Principal, St. Mary Catholic School, Lake Leelanau

Nicole Hatch, Principal, All Saints Catholic School, Alpena

Michelle Johnson, Principal, Our Lady of the Lake Regional Catholic School, Prudenville

Lisa Medina, Principal, St. Mary-Hannah Catholic School, Kingsley

Amy Rabeau, Principal, St. Ignatius of Loyola Catholic School, Rogers City

Tim St. Aubin, Principal, Holy Family Catholic School, East Tawas

ADDITIONAL CONTRIBUTORS

Michael Buell, Superintendent of Grand Traverse Area Catholic Schools, Traverse City

Julie Erhardt, Chief of Staff, Diocese of Gaylord

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Caryn Jacobs, Resource Assistant, Diocese of Gaylord

GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND CONSIDERATIONS FOR RE-OPENING

The main principles that need to be considered as schools re-open include:

1. Safety Protocols
2. Mental and Social-Emotional Health Considerations
3. Instructional Practices for both in-person and remote learning environments
4. School and Building Operations

Safety Protocols

Safety protocols involve the steps necessary to keep students and staff healthy, both in mind and body while in school. School preparedness activities should include being vigilant of, and actively mitigate against, the risk of COVID-19 spread. Schools will be asked to follow the judgement of the local health department for the particular county in which they are located.

Personal Protection

- Face masks will be worn by staff when they are within six feet of students or other adults or in common gathering areas of the school such as hallways, staff lounges, vestibules, etc.
- Students will wear masks when they are in hallways and common areas except when they are eating meals.
- Facial coverings should be worn in classrooms by grades 6-12, unless social distancing in the classroom can be achieved.
- Staff members or students who cannot tolerate wearing a mask for medical reasons will need written and signed documentation from a physician to be excused from this protocol.
- Face coverings may be homemade or disposable level one/basic-grade surgical masks or face shields.

Hygiene

- School leadership needs to provide adequate supplies to support healthy hygiene behaviors (including soap, hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol for safe use by staff and students, paper towels, etc.)
- Students need to continue to be taught proper handwashing technique with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Staff and students need to continue to be educated on how to cough and sneeze into their elbows, or to cover with a tissue.
- Students will frequently wash hands, including when they enter the classroom, before and after meals, and before and after recess.
- Staff will systematically and frequently check and refill soap and hand sanitizers.
- Limit sharing of classroom materials to small groups and disinfect between uses.

Spacing, Movement and Access

- Space students as far apart as feasible in classrooms, whether at desks or tables.
- Post signage to indicate proper social distancing.
- Provide social distancing markers in waiting and reception areas, bathrooms and cafeterias.
- Entrances to the school will be restricted to students and staff only, with the following allowances:

- Family members or other non-staff adults are not allowed in the school building except when extenuating services are determined by school officials.
- All non-staff adults entering the building must be screened for symptoms, wear a facial covering, and wash hands prior to entering.
- A record of visitors will be kept in the school office.

Screening Students and Staff

- Schools must communicate with their local public health department regarding implementing protocols for screening students and staff.
- Identify and designate a quarantine area and a staff person to care for students and staff who develop signs or [symptoms](#) of COVID-19 at school.
- Students and staff who become ill with signs or [symptoms](#) of COVID-19 will be placed in an identified quarantine area with a facial covering in place, until they can be picked up.
- Symptomatic students and staff sent home from school will stay home until they have tested negative or have completely recovered according to CDC guidelines.
- Staff will conduct daily safety self-examinations, including a temperature check, prior to coming to work. If they exhibit any new or unusual symptoms as reported on the COVID-19 school monitoring form, they will stay home.

Testing Protocols for Students and Staff

- Students and staff who become ill with signs or [symptoms](#) of COVID-19 will be placed in an identified quarantine area with facial covering in place, if able, until they can be picked up.
- Symptomatic students and staff sent home from school will stay home until they have tested negative or have completely recovered according to CDC guidelines.
- Families will be notified of the presence of any laboratory positive cases of COVID-19 in the classroom and/or school (template may be needed).
- The local public health department will be contacted if a confirmed case of COVID-19 is identified. Collect the contact information for the affected individual from two days before he or she was last present in school. Communicate this information with the local health department as they will initiate contact tracing. Confidentiality of the identity of the student or staff member must be maintained.

Food Service, Gatherings and Extracurricular Activities

- Assemblies or gatherings that bring together students from more than one classroom are suspended at this time.
- School Masses will be allowed but need to follow all Diocese of Gaylord guidelines. Masses may need to be added as necessary to accommodate the increased need for social distancing.

- If cafeterias are used and six feet of distance between students is not possible, meal times should be staggered or physical barriers should be used. Serving and cafeteria staff will use barrier protection including gloves, face shields, and surgical masks.
- Classrooms and outdoor areas can be used for students to eat meals at school.
- After school programs may continue with the use of social distancing and/or the use of facial coverings.

Athletics

- Schools will comply with all guidelines published by the Michigan High School Athletic Association (MHSAA).
- Students, teachers and staff must use proper hand hygiene techniques before and after every practice, game or gathering.
- Every participant will confirm that they are healthy and without symptoms prior to any event.
- Equipment must be disinfected before and after use. There should be no sharing of equipment, water bottles, etc.
- Indoor weight rooms and physical conditioning activities are allowed, but social distancing should take place as much as possible and sharing equipment will be avoided.
- Spectators are allowed provided that facial coverings are used by observers and six feet of social distancing can be maintained.

Cleaning

- Frequently touched surfaces including light switches, doors, benches, and bathrooms will all undergo cleaning at least every four hours with either an EPA approved disinfectant or diluted bleach solution.
- Student desks will be wiped down when students change classrooms or as often as is reasonably possible when students leave rooms.
- Schools will provide adequate supplies to support healthy hygiene behaviors (including soap, hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol for safe use by staff and students, paper towels, tissues, and signs reinforcing proper handwashing techniques).
- Schools will post signage to indicate proper social distancing and hand hygiene techniques.
- Playground equipment will undergo normal routine maintenance and should be wiped down daily.
- Visitors to the school building will be discouraged at this time. However when visitors, contractors, and other guests enter the building, they will be screened for symptoms, wear a facial covering, and wash/sanitize hands prior to entering. Strict records, including date and time, will be kept of non-school employees or other visitors entering and exiting the building.
- Staff must wear masks and gloves when performing cleaning activities.

Transportation

(Schools that use public school busing will defer safety guidelines to those providers. The following guidance is included for schools who are their own provider of busing services.)

- Schools will require the use of hand sanitizer before entering a school bus. Hand sanitizer will be supplied on the bus.
- The bus driver and all students will wear masks on the bus unless social distancing can be attained based on limited ridership.
- Schools will clean and disinfect transportation vehicles before and after every transit route.
- If a student becomes sick during the day, they will not be able to use group transportation to return home and must follow protocols outlined above.

Medically Vulnerable Students and Staff

- Current plans need to be reviewed for properly accommodating students with special healthcare needs in relationship especially to their risk for exposure to COVID-19.
- A plan will be developed to address requests for alternative learning arrangements or work assignments.
- Enable staff who identify as high risk for severe illness to minimize face-to-face contact and to allow them to maintain a distance of six feet from others if possible.

Mental and Social-Emotional Health Protocols

Mental and Social-Emotional Health Protocols have to do with looking out for the mental well-being of our students and staff. Students and staff will be under varying levels of stress when returning to school based on their individual response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Being aware of these needs will be a factor in a successful re-entry of students to school, as well as reassuring worried parents as they return their students to school. Below are basic principles in these areas for returning to school.

Student Mental Health/Well-being

- Establish and communicate to staff guidelines for identification and referral of at-risk students to appropriate building level support person or team.
- Identify a point person to centralize mental health referrals and communications to families.
- Update crisis management plans to leverage internal and external resources as needed for the assistance of students who are experiencing difficulties.
- Compile a list of resources related to COVID-19 issues to make available to both staff and students. These should include help with understanding what a normal behavioral response to a crisis looks like, general best practices of talking through trauma with children, and teaching positive self-care strategies that promote health and wellness.
- Local resources such as the Catholic Human Services or the Department of Mental Health should be accessed if questions arise about student emotional or behavioral issues.

Teacher Mental Health/ Well-Being

- Principals should provide access to mental health experts and resources during times of crisis and remote learning.
- When creating academic schedules, take into consideration the additional time and effort that is necessary in a remote instruction environment and adjust accordingly by providing ample planning time for teachers to be successful.
- Establish a regular schedule of virtual faculty meetings to maintain contact with teachers and staff.
- School administrators should be attentive to the individual health and wellness of fellow employees and provide relevant resources as needed.

Instructional Practices

Schools within the Diocese of Gaylord provide educational opportunities in varied and diverse settings. As highlighted in the section on Safety Protocols, as long as school is held in-person, the staff need to take essential actions to mitigate risk and operate as safely as possible.

The following information relates to recommendations for both face-to-face learning and distance learning, in case a need arises to revert to this format. Schools ought to consider designating days/times for usage so as to maintain familiarity with the online learning platforms and to ensure a smooth transition for all if required.

Remote Learning

- School Administrations will create a work group to gather feedback from families, teachers and students about their experiences with remote learning. Utilize the feedback to revise school's learning plans in the case of a return to remote learning.
- School Administrators will familiarize the school's remote learning plan with all stakeholders in case of a return to remote learning.
- If needed, revise IEP's, IFSP's and accommodation plans to reflect the student's changing needs based on assessment data and parent feedback, and design accommodations and services accordingly that can be utilized both at school and at home.
- Schools should work with families to provide a web-enabled device that is compatible with the platforms utilized for distance learning.
- Regarding **attendance**, school personnel should require parents to acknowledge the day's lessons to ensure parents are informed of each day's learning goal and expectation.
- Teachers will take attendance of all meetings/lessons with students and follow up with parents if students are absent from a lesson.
- Teachers will maintain standard grading methods. Late work policies should be established by the classroom teacher and clearly communicated to students and parents.
- Schools will establish and communicate specific timelines for posting grades.
- Administrators will ensure that accommodation plans are made digitally accessible to the teachers at all times.
- Even with online learning, accommodations should be made to the best of the school's ability in regards to students with special needs.
- A system of frequent monitoring and intervention for students with accommodation plans should be in place to ensure that student's needs are met, regardless of format of delivery.

Communication and Support for Families

- When developing plans for the various learning scenarios, clearly communicate expectations to your families around your students' return to learning.

- Help families learn how to access and use the school's digital systems and tools so that families can build digital competencies.
- Provide resources for families to use at home, such as grade specific activities and strategies for teaching.
- As best as possible, try to ensure that all students and families have adequate connectivity and the devices necessary to successfully engage in and complete schoolwork.
- Parents will need to understand that attendance and schoolwork completion will be monitored and students will receive feedback on the student's work production.

A Special Note about our Catholic Curriculum

- As before the pandemic, religion and Catholic faith will be integrated daily at all levels.
- Weekly Mass will be provided. Consider livestreaming daily Mass so students and families can tune in if a return to remote learning occurs.
- Sacraments should continue to be offered in the schools, with precautions in place, as necessary.
- Schools should provide virtual retreats and opportunities for spiritual growth to students and parents.

Operations

School Administration and School Pastors have worked to plan, organize and mitigate the conditions that lead to the spread of transmittable diseases, including COVID-19, but other illnesses, as well. As a general rule, most organizations are following the most stringent cleaning, disinfecting, PPE (personal protection equipment), and other measures. The items below are a portion of what must be done to re-open our facilities to students.

School Buildings and Other Facilities

- Plexiglass dividers are being recommended for use in each school building. They will be placed in offices and other areas where face-to-face contact is necessary. Offices and screening points will be the primary areas impacted.
- HVAC systems and fans will be optimized to move more air and increase fresh air into the buildings.
- Frequently touched surfaces including light switches, doors, benches, bathrooms, will undergo cleaning at least every four hours with either an EPA-approved disinfectant or diluted bleach solution.
- Libraries, computer labs, arts, and other hands-on classrooms will undergo cleaning after every class period with either an EPA-approved disinfectant or diluted bleach solution.
- Student desks will be wiped down or sprayed with either an EPA-approved disinfectant or diluted bleach solution after every class period.
- We will ensure safe and correct use and storage of cleaning and disinfecting products, including storing products securely away from children, and with adequate ventilation when staff use products.
- When cleaning and disinfecting electronic devices, staff will consult their IT department for specific recommendations. 70% alcohol wipes will be the likely solution.
- Schools will add to existing Hand Sanitizing and Hand Washing Stations (wall-hanging units as well as pump bottles) and increase the quantity of what may have already been shipped to their facility. A site analysis will be conducted.
- Staff will wear gloves, a surgical mask, and face shield when performing all cleaning activities.
- Custodial staff will undergo additional training on the latest cleaning and sanitizing methods.
- Coordinate with Local Emergency Management Programs (LEMPs) for support with procurement of cleaning and disinfection supplies.

Budget Food Service and Technology

- Develop a technology plan which includes training and support for educators to adapt to remote learning.
- Conduct staff and student outreach to understand who is coming back to school and who is undecided.
- Develop a staffing plan to account for teachers and staff who are not returning or at-risk.
- Utilize CARES Act funding for key purchases, e.g. cleaning supplies.
- Be aware of changing enrollment patterns and how they put a constraint on resources.
- Collaborate with food service staff to ensure any necessary food handling changes are based on local public health guidelines.

CONTINGENCY PLANS

Phase 5 - 6

If the schools in the Diocese stay in Phase 5 of the MI Safe Start Plan for longer than 4 weeks after the start of school, schools can begin to relax some requirements as determined by the State guidelines. Furthermore, if the schools move into Phase 6 of the MI Safe Start Plan, they can further relax some requirements as determined by the State Guidelines.

Phase 4

The protocols in this plan have been written in such a way that schools can easily move back to Phase 4 status, if necessary. School preparedness and response activities will continue so that schools can continue to execute active mitigation measures. Schools will need to continue, and perhaps increase, contact with the health department in their region of the state. In-person instruction will still be permitted with increased safety protocols.

Phase 1 - 3

If a school or schools in the Diocese of Gaylord moves back to Phase 1 - 3 of the MI Safe Start Plan, they will operate in a remote learning environment for that period of time. Faculty will be afforded the opportunity to work from the school building if desired in order to facilitate instruction. All faculty will develop contingency plans to enable a 24-hour transition to remote learning. The schools will further evaluate other options and consider other strategies to expedite in-person instruction. Other strategies and efforts may become necessary to assist in this objective.

RESOURCES

General

State of Michigan: Executive Order
[EO 2020-142.pdf](https://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-37818_53456--,00.html)

State of Michigan: Roadmap
[MI Safe Schools Return to School Roadmap](https://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-37818_53456--,00.html)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):
Coronavirus (COVID-19)
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/>

State of Michigan: COVID-19 response
https://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-37818_53456--,00.html

CDC: Resources for Childcare, Schools and Youth Programs
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/index.html>

Federal OSHA
<https://www.osha.gov/>

Hygiene

Handwashing video translated into multiple languages
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LdQuPGVcceg>

CDC Prevention
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html>

CDC Hygiene Etiquette
https://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/hygiene/etiquette/coughing_sneezing.html

Housekeeping

CDC Disinfecting
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html>

CDC Cleaning
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/cleaning-disinfection.html>

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
<https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2-covid-19>

Employees Exhibiting Signs and Symptoms of COVID-19

CDC Sickness Steps
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/steps-when-sick.html>

OSHA Training

Federal OSHA
<https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3990.pdf>

Social Distancing

CDC
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html>

Social Distancing Calculator
<https://www.banquettablespro.com/social-distancing-room-space-calculator>

Mental Health

Catholic Human Services
<https://www.catholichumanservices.org/>

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Health and Safety

Q: What does “reopening our schools” really mean?

A: Gathering as a school community is an integral part of Catholic education. Our plan is to reopen our school buildings to students this fall. This means that all students are welcome to return to classes for face-to-face instruction. We have developed an in-depth plan that addresses numerous aspects of the reopening process, and how schools will function once reopened.

Q: Will students be safe when school is reopened?

A: Safety is always our top priority in Catholic education. In constructing our reopening plan, we have closely studied guidance from federal and state authorities.

Q: Who decides when a school has met the requirements to reopen? When will this happen?

A: Our plan includes specific requirements that schools must meet in order to reopen. Schools must complete a plan and submit it to the diocese for review. In completing this plan, the schools must take into account both opening for school with face-to-face instruction and/or returning to a remote learning platform, if necessary.

Q: Will all students be allowed to return to school at the same time?

A: Yes. Our plan provides for the return of all Catholic school students for full-day instruction.

Q: Will students and Staff need to wear masks at school?

A: All 6th-12th grade students will need to wear masks while at school, unless social distancing in the classrooms can be assured. Masks may be removed for brief periods of time under certain circumstances (such as outdoor play or lunch). However, when masks are removed, students must remain physically distant from one another (at least six feet).

All students in grades kindergarten through 5 will not be required to wear facial coverings in their classrooms, unless 1) students do not remain with their cohort class throughout the school day, and 2) come into close contact with students in another class.

All staff will wear facial coverings when in classrooms, except 1) if social distancing can be maintained in the classroom, 2) during meals and 3) unless face coverings cannot be medically tolerated as documented through written and signed verification by a physician.

Q: Do I need to purchase masks for my child?

A: Yes. We are asking all parents to purchase masks for their child. Parents may opt to buy disposable or reusable masks. For disposable masks, each mask must be thrown away at the end of every school day and parents should send plenty of extra masks to school with their child. For reusable masks, masks should be cleaned after every use and students should send at least one extra reusable mask to school.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: Can face shields be used instead of masks?

A: Face masks have proven to be more effective than shields to contain the spread of COVID-19. Therefore, we are strongly encouraging the use of face masks while at school.

Q: Will teachers teach children how to use masks?

A: Yes. We know that students will need training to learn how to properly wear masks. We will spend time at the beginning of the school year helping children learn how to safely keep masks in place.

Q: Will students be required to physically distance at school?

A: When students are with their class or cohort, they should remain as far apart as possible, but do not need to keep at least six feet apart. **Schools are encouraged to keep students in cohort groups (self-contained classrooms) for as much as possible throughout the day.**

Q: Should I take my child's temperature every day before school?

A: Yes. A high fever is a key symptom of COVID-19. Parents should take their child's temperature every day before their child is taken to school. If your child has a temperature of over 100.4°F, your child needs to be kept home from school. You should contact your child's doctor and the school's main office. Similarly, you should ask your child if he/she has any of the other [symptoms](#) of COVID-19, such as a sore throat, coughing, or nausea. If your child complains of these symptoms, you should keep him/her home and contact your doctor and the school office.

Q: How will drop-off and pick-up be handled?

A: We are asking each school to carefully evaluate drop-off and pick-up procedures. Schools will use various entrances and exits to minimize contact between student cohorts. Parents will be asked not to congregate near school doors. Your principal will communicate specific drop-off and pick-up procedures to you ahead of the start of school.

In addition, when students enter school every day, they will be asked to participate in two tasks. These are:

1. Students will wash their hands with soap or use hand sanitizer.
2. Students will be asked if they are feeling well.

If a student has a temperature above 100.4°F or complains of other COVID-19 symptoms, he/she will be immediately sent to a quarantine room.

Q: What does the plan say about safety and cleanliness requirements for school buildings?

A: Our plan includes very specific requirements for the ongoing cleaning and sanitizing of our school buildings. Generally speaking, buildings will be cleaned very frequently, with a particular focus on high-traffic areas and common surfaces. Windows and/or vents should be opened to maximize air flow. Barriers will be installed in main office areas.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: How will lunch take place when school reopens?

A: If cafeterias are used and six feet of distance between students is not possible, meal times will be staggered and physical barriers will be used. Serving and cafeteria staff will use barrier protection including gloves, face shields, and surgical masks. Classrooms or outdoor areas can be used for students to eat meals at school.

Q: What about recess?

A: Schools may still conduct recess, but schools must fulfill defined safety requirements. For example, cohorts must be spread out from one another. If recess is outdoors, masks may be removed, but students will stay at least six feet apart.

Q: Can I still volunteer at school?

A: We have asked schools to minimize the number of volunteers this year in an effort to mitigate risk.

Q: Will extended care (before and after care) be available this year?

A: Yes. Schools may continue to offer extended care. Our schools will follow LARA Regulations for extended care.

Q: My child and/or another member of my household is in an at-risk group for COVID-19. Should I send my child to school?

A: Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has defined [conditions in which certain people may be more at risk for severe illness through COVID-19](#). If your child or another member of your household is in an at-risk group, we encourage you to speak to your doctor. Ultimately you should decide whether it is safe for your child to attend school.

Q: Is it okay for my family to travel out of town during the COVID-19 pandemic?

A: We recommend that you not travel out of town during the current pandemic. However, if travel is necessary, we encourage you to become familiar with the CDC's Travel Guidelines. If you or a member of your household travels to another country or to a state identified by the CDC as having a surge in COVID-19 cases, your school may ask you to wait for 14 days until returning your child to school.

Q: What happens if there is a COVID-19 surge in Northern Michigan and the state imposes more restrictions on schools?

A: If a COVID-19 surge occurs, we will work closely with state officials to determine whether we can continue face-to-face instruction (even on an alternate schedule). If necessary, we will return to at-home virtual instruction.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Infection Protocols

Q: What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

A: The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has identified several [symptoms](#) of COVID-19, including high fever (above 100.4°F), sore throat, coughing, nausea, headache, muscle aches, loss of taste or smell, runny nose, fatigue, diarrhea and difficulty breathing.

Q: What should I do if my child has symptoms of COVID-19?

A: If your child shows [symptoms](#) of COVID-19, you contact your doctor. Your doctor may ask that your child participate in a COVID-19 test. You should alert your school's main office and not send your child to school.

If the symptoms occur during the school day, your child will be immediately sent to the office and you will be contacted to pick your child up from school.

Q: My child had COVID-19-like symptoms, but tested negative for COVID-19. When can he/she return to school?

A: If your child does not have COVID-19, but has another illness, you must keep your child home until the illness symptoms disappear.

Q: What should I do if my child tests positive for COVID-19?

A: Immediately contact your doctor for additional instructions. Also contact your school's main office. Do not send your child to school.

Q: When can a student return to school after receiving a positive COVID-19 test?

A: If a student tests positive for COVID-19, the student must isolate and not return to school until they have met [CDC's criteria to discontinue home isolation](#). This includes:

1. Three or more days without a high fever;
2. An absence of other COVID-19 symptoms; and
3. At least 14 days have passed since symptoms first appeared.

Q: What should I do if a member of my household (who is not my child) tests positive for COVID-19?

A: Immediately contact your school's main office. Your school will ask that you keep your child home for at least 14 days. If your family member recovers from COVID-19 (through meeting the criteria in the previous question) AND your child shows no COVID-19 symptoms for the 14-day period, your school may allow your child to return.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: What happens if my child's teacher tests positive for COVID-19?

A: Should any employee have COVID-19 symptoms or tests positive for COVID-19, we will follow the same protocols used for students (see above). If your child's teacher becomes sick and is unable to work, your school will provide a substitute teacher.

Q: What happens if another student in my child's class tests positive for COVID-19?

A: Your school will make all parents aware that a student has tested positive for COVID-19. All students in the cohort will be monitored closely for COVID-19 symptoms. If more than one student tests positive for COVID-19, it is likely that the entire cohort will be sent home for at least 14 days. Students will be allowed to complete work virtually while the cohort is away from school.

Q: Could my child's school building be closed down due to COVID-19 this year?

A: We will do our best to ensure a safe and healthy environment in the coming year. However, if numerous cases appear in a single school, resulting in the isolation of multiple classes/cohorts, we may need to close the school building and transition all students to virtual learning for a time. Parents will be updated regularly should that need arise.

Academics and Programming

Q: Will my child's curriculum be changed this year?

A: Schools will still deliver high-quality instruction in core subjects (religion, language arts, math, science and social studies). Special requirements will be in place for departmentalized classes and special area subjects (see sections below). The implementation of safety and health requirements (outlined earlier in this FAQ) will create new complexities in instruction, but our commitment remains to provide your child the best possible faith-based education.

Q: Will my child's classroom look different?

A: We have instructed schools to spread out desks and tables in classrooms as much as possible. In order to maximize floor space, we've asked teachers to remove non-essential furniture and other items. We have also asked that desks and tables be arranged so that they face the front of the room. These steps were taken to minimize risk of any infection in the classroom.

Q: Will students share school supplies?

A: No. We are asking schools to ensure that students not share school supplies (e.g., books, crayons, technology, etc.), including such subjects as art and music. Exceptions may be made for activities outdoors (such as outdoor physical education classes). If it is impossible to avoid sharing supplies, such as computers in a computer lab, such supplies must be cleaned after every use.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: Will students still change classes?

A: Many schools offer departmentalization, in which students change classes for core subjects (religion, language arts, math, science and social studies). Students will wear masks when changing classes throughout the day.

Q: Will schools still offer classes in special subject areas (e.g., art, music, PE, etc.)?

A: Yes. As with departmentalization (see last question), we will ask special subject area teachers to travel to each class' homeroom for instruction whenever possible. This will be particularly likely for such subjects as art, music, health and foreign language. If students visit spaces such as the gymnasium, computer/STEM lab or library, the room must be cleaned after every cohort.

Q: Will students participate in field trips?

A: Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, schools will not participate in in-person field trips while the District is in Phase 4. Students in Phase 5 may participate in field trips but only with students practicing social distancing and masks being worn.

Q: I need to meet with a teacher or my school principal. Can these meetings occur?

A: Yes. These meetings can take place virtually via phone or video chat. Please contact your building administrator to make arrangements for these types of meetings.

Q: Will school Masses still take place?

A: The diocese has defined a specific plan for parishes that allows for the celebration of Mass under specific conditions. Schools will be asked to follow this plan, in close coordination with the local pastor and parish, in determining how Masses may be celebrated.

Q: How will extracurricular activities be impacted this year?

A: Our plan provides guidance on specific extracurricular activities. Highlights of this guidance include (by activity):

- **Athletics:** We are awaiting further information from the state regarding athletics. More information will be provided to parents as it is known.
- **Band:** Rehearsals for small groups may take place for non-wind instruments (e.g., percussion, strings, etc.). Students must be physically distant. Rehearsals must occur virtually or outdoors for wind instruments (woodwinds and brass).
- **Choir, Drama/School Play, Christmas Program:** Due to ongoing health concerns, we are asking schools to conduct such programs virtually or postpone or cancel them until later in the school year.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- **Other Activities:** For other activities (e.g., robotics, debate, etc.), schools must meet specific health and safety requirements. If such requirements cannot be met, these activities should be conducted virtually or canceled.

Tuition and Fees

Q: Will schools still collect tuition this year?

A: Yes. While this school year may look different, our schools will continue to provide a rigorous academic experience while supporting the moral and spiritual development of each student. Our Catholic schools depend upon tuition revenue to pay our employees who do this work and support other school-related expenses.

Q: I am having difficulty paying tuition, as my own workplace has been impacted by COVID-19. What do I do?

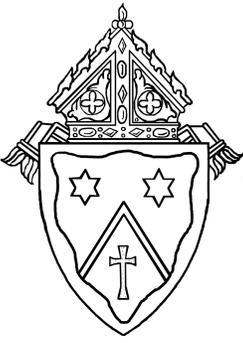
A: We know that some families may have difficulties paying tuition due to the loss of pay during workplace closures and are ready to support those in need of assistance. If this is happening to you, please contact your school's principal. We understand your situation and will do our very best to work with you.

Q: Will fees be changed this year?

A: Each school develops their own fees based upon their own local needs. Fees may be adjusted if a program or activity has been directly impacted by COVID-19. For example, if a fee is collected for a particular field trip, it is likely that the fee will not be collected this year (as field trips will not occur).



Office of Catholic Schools
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www.dioceseofgaylord.org



DIOCESE OF GAYLORD

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PHONE: 989.732.5147
FAX: 989.705.3589

DATE: July 30, 2020

TO: Priests, Pastoral Administrators, Deacons, Seminarians

FROM: Most Reverend Walter A. Hurley *+ Walter C. Hurley*

RE: Update Regarding Current Executive Orders

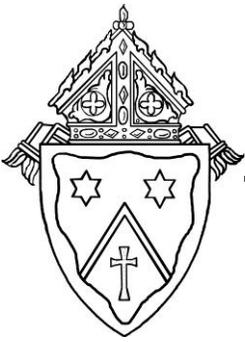
Update Regarding Current Executive Orders

With the newest Executive Orders issued from Governor Whitmer yesterday, July 29, revised protocols have been put in place for the maximum number in attendance for indoor gatherings in the state of Michigan.

Bearing this in mind, I want to clarify the following for parish gatherings:

- The following indoor parish gatherings are not affected by the July 29 Executive Orders and should continue to be celebrated in the same manner:
 - Masses
 - Weddings
 - Funerals
 - Baptisms
 - Eucharistic Adoration
- All other indoor gatherings, such as bible studies, council meetings, faith formation classes, etc. are restricted to 10 people in attendance.

We will keep you informed of additional changes as they become available. Thank you for all that you are doing for your people. Be assured of my prayers and continued support to you in any way I can.



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July 29, 2020

As this time of pandemic continues to unfold, we remain attentive to the safety and well-being of all who enter our churches to pray and participate in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. We recognize that during this unprecedented season of the Church, all are called to make sacrifices that are uncomfortable and out of the ordinary. *We do this in charity for one another*, despite the difficulty and challenges it may bring. Bearing this in mind, these reminders are shared to help and assist you and your parish leaders to continue to maintain proper safeguards to protect the health of our assemblies and others whom they will encounter. These reminders follow the recommendations of the Center for Disease Control (CDC), United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) through resources prepared by members of the Thomistic Institute of the Dominican House in Washington DC and the Federation of Liturgical Commissions (FDLC).

MASKS

Wearing a mask is one act of charity we do to protect others. **Masks continue to be required for everyone in the Church, except children under the age of five, those with medical conditions and the ministers when in the sanctuary.** Members of the assembly who refuse to wear masks should be invited to sit in a designated area.

MUSIC AND SINGING DURING MASS

Refraining from singing is also to protect those around us. Therefore, **we need to ask our assemblies to not sing during Mass to reduce spreading airborne particles (even while wearing masks).**

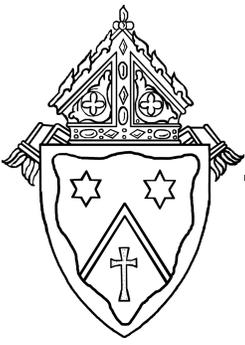
What does this look like during the Mass?

- The only singing is to be by the musician or cantor, who may sing the Entrance Antiphon and the Communion Antiphon.
- The Gloria, Psalm responses, Holy Holy, Mystery of Faith, Great Amen and Lamb of God should all be spoken. The celebrant/presider should also recite the prayers of the Mass.
- Instrumental music may be used during the Preparation of the Altar, Communion and Recessional.

EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF HOLY COMMUNION

When using extraordinary ministers, the last action they should take before being handed the ciborium is to sanitize their hands. The sanitizing must occur *after* they have received communion and put their masks back in place.

I recognize how difficult these protocols are, but cannot stress enough the critical task set before us to make sacrifices out of charity for one another. Thank you for your continued efforts and for your leadership to your people.



DIOCESE OF GAYLORD

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DATE: July 24, 2020

TO: Priests, Pastoral Administrators, Deacons, Seminarians

FROM: Most Reverend Walter A. Hurley

RE: Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) Loans

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Walter A. Hurley".

Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) Loans

I want to provide you with a brief update on the recent survey I had conducted by my office. From the information we were able to gather from the survey my office sent to the parishes:

- 72 responded to the survey.
- 29 Catholic parishes and schools in the Diocese of Gaylord applied for and received a loan through the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP).

The total amount given to these 29 parishes and schools who received a PPP loan was \$4,049,303. These 29 recipients were awarded amounts between \$9,367 and \$1,418,200. The largest loan was given to Grand Traverse Area Catholic Schools (\$1,418,200). We were pleased to learn that Catholic Human Services also received a loan of \$522,535. These loans will be of great assistance to our parishes, schools and institutions.

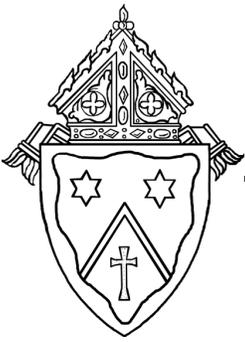
Our Catholic parishes, schools and institutions are among numerous "non-profits" in our communities that qualified and received this support from the federal government. The loans were based on a formula and specified for use on employee payroll, rent and utilities. In this way, our Catholic parishes, schools and organizations were able to support employment for many who otherwise would have been laid off; have had their hours reduced; or have had their employment terminated.

If funds are spent appropriately, loans are expected to be forgiven, but the forgiveness must be requested and applied for. In order to have these loans forgiven, it will be necessary for those who received the loans to apply for the forgiveness through the local banks through which they received the loan. I have asked our finance office to also send out some additional materials on this.

The Diocese of Gaylord did not apply for a PPP loan in the initial phases of the program, but has since done so in the current phase, seeking a loan for \$414,000.

I was surprised, quite frankly, that more of our parishes did not apply, but with the most recent extension of the program there is still time to do so. Parishes that have not applied for these loans can do so through August 8, 2020. Kim Smith in our Finance Office can also assist in providing you information on these loans. Under separate cover, Ms. Smith will send you general information regarding PPP loans, a link to the loan application, and a link to the loan forgiveness application. I would certainly ask those who did not apply to consider doing so.

Good wishes to all.



DIOCESE OF GAYLORD

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
JULY 16, 2020

Statement from Bishop Hurley on Assistance to Schools

GAYLORD, MI – With the recent announcement of a lawsuit against the U.S. Department of Education seeking to withhold CARES (Coronavirus Aid Relief, and Economic Security) Act funds from nonpublic schools, the Diocese of Gaylord's Office of Communications releases the following statement from the Most Rev. Walter Hurley, Apostolic Administrator:

"At this critical time, it is important to be led by an approach that will best protect the health and safety of all of our children and their teachers and staff in Northern Michigan. Our Catholic Schools in the Diocese of Gaylord are a critically important part of our local communities.

"It is disappointing to hear that the Governor, Attorney General and State Superintendent of Schools have filed a lawsuit, that if it prevails, would seriously limit funding to our Catholic Schools that might come to us as a result of the CARES Act, approved to assist all schools in the midst of this current COVID-19 crisis.

"We will follow this situation closely and pray that it is resolved in the best way possible, which takes into account the welfare of all children, both in public and private schools."

###

The Diocese of Gaylord was established by His Holiness Pope Paul VI on July 20, 1971. The territory encompasses 11,171 square miles and includes the 21 most northern counties of Michigan's Lower Peninsula. The region is home to approximately 65,000 Catholics, served by 75 parishes, 17 Catholic schools and many closely-related institutions. For more information, visit www.dioceseofgaylord.org.

Keywords: Roman Catholic Church, Diocese of Gaylord, Bishop Walter A. Hurley, Catholic Schools

Media Contact:

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DIOCESE OF GAYLORD

611 WEST NORTH STREET
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PHONE: 989.732.5147
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DATE: July 10, 2020

TO: Priests, Pastoral Administrators, Deacons, Seminarians

FROM: Most Reverend Walter A. Hurley *+ Walter A. Hurley*

RE: Requirement to Wear Masks (Face Coverings)

NEW EXECUTIVE ORDER REQUIRES MASKS IN ANY INDOOR PUBLIC SPACES

We have received notice that Governor Gretchen Whitmer has signed an executive order this morning that will go into effect on Monday, July 13, 2020. **This executive order requires that individuals wear a face covering when in any indoor public space, and in outdoor public spaces that are not able to accommodate social distancing.** I expect that all of our parishes will comply with this requirement and properly instruct your parishioners of this protocol, even though we find it to be difficult.

To prepare for this, please review today's Executive Order, which can be found at:

https://content.govdelivery.com/attachments/MIEOG/2020/07/10/file_attachments/1492866/EO%202020-147%20Emerg%20order%20-%20Masks.pdf

It is important to note that:

- As has been the practice to date, priests and altar servers may remove their face coverings while in the sanctuary, with the exception of during the distribution of the Eucharist.
- Parishioners are required to wear a mask to celebrate Mass, but can remove them temporarily to receive the Eucharist.
- The requirement to wear a face covering does not apply to certain individuals, including those younger than five years old. The additional specifications for which individuals are not required to wear a face covering can be found in the Executive Order.

Thank you for your continued concern for the care and safety of your people; I know these are difficult times and I am here to support you in every way I can.



STEVEN JOHN

By the grace of God and the Apostolic See

DECREE

Summary: Resumption of public Masses on Wednesday, May 20, 2020; Delegation to confer the Sacrament of Confirmation in parishes through Labor Day weekend to young people who would be making First Communion and Confirmation this year; continuation of dispensation from the obligation of attending Sunday Masses for those still affected extended until Friday, September 6, 2020.

As the pandemic affecting the State of Michigan continues to wane, and with continuing concern for the health and safety of those who wish to return to the celebration of Mass, and mindful of the Executive Orders of the Governor of Michigan and the plan for re-opening of businesses of the State, this decree outlines various directives for the faithful of the parishes, schools and institutions throughout the Diocese of Gaylord.

Beginning on the Wednesday, May 20, 2020, the undersigned Bishop of Gaylord decrees that public Masses may resume in the parishes and chapels throughout the diocese provided that the protocols emanating from the Worship Office of the Diocese of Gaylord as well as all protocols offered through federal, state and local health authorities are observed. Parishes, institutions and schools throughout the diocese may develop a reasonable approach to re-opening dependent upon local circumstances and readiness. The timetable should be announced through the bulletin, website, and social media in your area.

Those above the age of 65 and those with other underlying health issues, those who care for those with compromised health at home, in nursing homes, or at hospitals, or who have had COVID-19 in their households, are exempt from the obligation to attend Sunday and holyday Masses and may fulfill their obligation by participating, if possible, through social media, TV or other means, making a spiritual communion. Those who wish to attend Mass, celebrate the sacraments and events, including weddings and funerals, in parishes throughout the diocese, may do so observing the health care protocols – washing / sanitizing hands, wearing masks, and social distancing as appropriate to keep each other healthy and safe. Those with elevated temperatures, or who are ill, are to remain home.

As the summer progresses and the impact of the COVID-19 wanes, the faithful are to make a concerted effort to return to the celebration of Sunday and Holyday Masses. As of the writing of

this decree, all the faithful are to return to fulfill Sunday obligations beginning the Sunday following Labor Day, i.e., the weekend of September 12-13, 2020, unless there is a recurrence of the pandemic. Those who are still affected in some way by COVID-19 as outlined above remain dispensed from the fulfillment of this obligation.

In addition to the faculties that priests already have in the *pagella* of faculties, I also delegate pastors, parochial vicars and sacramental ministers where they are currently assigned to administer the Sacrament of Confirmation for those individuals in the parishes who would be making first communion and confirmation in this year's class at an appropriate moment, provided that churches are open for the public celebration of Mass. Forthcoming indications will offer guidance for these celebrations. This delegation will be valid for all Masses beginning on May 30, 2020 through August 31, 2020.

Because the current situation we are experiencing remains dynamic, the provisions in this decree may be modified, rescinded or extended by the Ordinary of the Diocese of Gaylord. Similarly, revised protocols from the Office of Worship will be modified accordingly to address any new circumstances that arise.

Given in the Pastoral Center in the Diocese of Gaylord on this the 15th day of May, 2020.

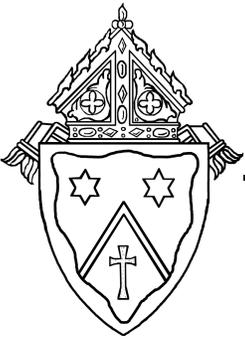
+ Steven J Raica

Most Reverend Steven J Raica
Bishop of Gaylord

Kevin L Endres

Deacon Kevin Endres
Chancellor





DIocese of GAYLORD

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May 12, 2020

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

Greetings in the Risen Lord! The First Letter of St Peter exhorts us: “There is cause for rejoicing here. You may for a time have to suffer the distress of many trials: but this is so that your faith, which is more precious than the passing splendor of fire-tried gold, may by its genuineness lead to praise, glory, and honor when Jesus Christ appears.” These past few months, I pray, have helped us to realize and cherish our faith, family and friends with even greater intensity.

It has been two months since we last celebrated public Masses together in our parishes, shrines and chapels across the Diocese of Gaylord. With this public statement I share with you the good news that we are at a stage of beginning to re-open our churches for public celebrations of the Eucharist beginning on Wednesday, May 20. Churches should not open, if they are not ready to do so. Parish opening information should occur through the parish website and on other social media. Each pastor or pastoral administrator, working with their pastoral council, should be sure they have the diocesan directives in place prior to opening for the public to attend Mass.

As we open up our churches for public Mass, expect that these celebrations will not be exactly what we may be used to or expect. Even though the coronavirus curve is flattening, the pandemic is not over. We must take precautions that will keep our risk as reduced as possible.

Protocols have been developed through a committee working with the Director of Worship, that have considered expert advice from the medical field and liturgical experts. The protocols are meant to complement the wise guidance of the federal, state and local health agencies for the sake of the common good. Below is a list of some things you can expect when you return to public worship.

- Expect that you will not see everyone at Mass. **In the Diocese of Gaylord, dispensation from your Sunday obligation is extended through Sunday, September 6, 2020.** Not all will feel comfortable returning to public worship right away and some people should not return right away, including those over 65 years of age and those in a higher-risk category because of health issues and those who are currently ill. However, if you wish to return to Mass your Sunday obligation may be fulfilled at any Mass during the week.
- Expect that not all parishioners will be able to attend Mass on a Sunday because of reduced capacity. Churches are not to exceed 25% capacity in order to maintain proper social distancing. It is possible that Masses may be held outside.
- Expect to see all people over the age of two wearing masks.
- Expect that Communion distribution will be different to afford safe distancing between individuals.

- Expect the music to be led only by the musician and cantor. Or, you may not have any music at all for a while.
- There will be no hymn books or missals or worship aids in the pews.
- Expect other directives that may affect your local community and expect differences between parishes. We are striving for unity in our celebrations from parish to parish, not uniformity. What works one way in one parish, might work differently in another.
- Expect that each parish may open on a different schedule. We need patience to guide us these next few months.

I ask for and beg your patience as we learn all over again what it means to gather together. This will take some getting used to. I believe it can be done – so that we will be respectful of each other and our desire to resume our public Masses with decorum and dignity.

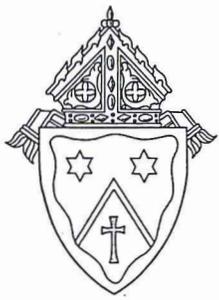
During this time, let us pray for each other and support each other as we resume our public celebrations. May what we do in these next few weeks as we re-open, as St Peter urges, lead to “praise, glory and honor” when Jesus Christ appears in our midst. “We adore you O Christ, and we praise you, because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.”

Invoking the prayerful embrace of our Lady of Mt Carmel, the patroness of our diocese, I remain

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Most Reverend Steven J Raica
Bishop of Gaylord



DIocese OF GAYLORD

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April 30, 2020

TO: Priests, Deacons, Religious, Seminarians, and Faithful of the Diocese of Gaylord
FROM: Most Reverend Steven J Raica

On April 24, 2020, Governor Whitmer extended the “Stay Home, Stay Safe” executive order for the entire State of Michigan through Friday, May 15, 2020. Therefore, in cooperation with our local authorities in keeping the people of our diocese, parishes and institutions safe during this time of pandemic, I extend the validity of the decree issued on April 3, 2020, through Friday, May 15, 2020. This extension includes all dispensations previously granted. While suspension of public Masses will continue through Friday, May 15, I urge local parish leadership and communities to continue their use of social media as well as finding other creative ways to promote our Catholic faith and the bold proclamation of the Gospel of Christ.

As a sign of hope, I have established an interdisciplinary working committee to help prepare principles, norms and guidelines to assist parish leaders and communities in opening our churches to public worship, celebration of the Sacraments, and parish activities when it becomes safe to do so. This step is a great indication that we are beginning to see some light at the end of the coronavirus tunnel.

At the same time, I pray for the steadfast faith of the People of God throughout the Diocese of Gaylord. May this time of fasting from the things we hold dear be an occasion to recommit ourselves to Christ, Our Lord and become intentional disciples.

On Friday, May 1, at 12:00 Noon (EDT), I will be re-consecrating our Diocese to the loving embrace and protection of our Blessed Mother. This event will be live-streamed from St Mary Cathedral in Gaylord on social media platforms. Other dioceses throughout the United States, Canada and the world will be doing so jointly at 3:00 PM (EDT). This ceremony can be viewed on many familiar social media outlets and EWTN.

May we keep ourselves under the loving protection and embrace of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, the patroness of our diocese.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Steven J Raica
Bishop of Gaylord



STEVEN JOHN

By the grace of God and the Apostolic See

DECREE

Summary: Suspension of public Masses in churches through May 15, 2020; Delegation to confer the Sacrament of Confirmation in parishes through August to young people who would be making First Communion and Confirmation this year.

As the pandemic continues to affect the citizens of the State of Michigan, the Governor of State issued an Executive Order extending the **Stay Home, Stay Safe** plan through Friday, May 15, 2020.

By this decree, I also extend the dispositive sections of the decree I issued on April 3, 2020 to extend through Friday, May 15, 2020. That is to say, all provisions remain in force, *mutatis mutandis*, including the celebration of Mass in private and the dispensation from the obligation for the faithful to attend Sunday and Holyday Masses during this period.

In addition to the faculties that priests already have in the *pagella* of faculties, I also delegate pastors, parochial vicars and sacramental ministers where they are currently assigned to administer the Sacrament of Confirmation for those individuals in the parishes who would be making first communion and confirmation in this year's class at an appropriate moment, provided that churches are open for the public celebration of Mass. Forthcoming indications will offer guidance for these celebrations. This delegation will be valid for all Masses beginning on May 30, 2020 through August 31, 2020.

The Office of Worship and the Bishop's Office will provide further indications regarding other aspects regarding sacramental and parochial life. Reasonable and measured protocols will be developed based on the guidelines issued by state and federal authorities whereby public Masses and parish life activities may be safely resumed.

Because the current situation we are experiencing remains dynamic, the provisions in this decree may be modified, rescinded or extended by subsequent decrees as needed to address any new circumstances that arise.

Given in the Pastoral Center in the Diocese of Gaylord on this the 30th day of April, 2020.


Deacon Kevin Endres
Chancellor




+ Steven J. Raica
Most Reverend Steven J. Raica
Bishop of Gaylord



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March 19, 2020
Solemnity of St. Joseph

Dear Brother Priests, Deacons, Pastoral Administrators, Religious and Faithful:

I continue to pray for all those in our beloved Diocese of Gaylord, throughout our state and nation, and throughout the world. I recognize what a challenging time this is, as we are not able to publicly attend Mass for the time being, and that there are questions and concerns as to what this means for our journey of faith, both individually and as the Church.

As I shared in my message on March 13, 2020, the novel coronavirus continues to ramp up with increasing health risks to the general population throughout our country and state. It has been necessary to make some difficult decisions to do our part in stemming the spread of this pernicious virus. Doing the difficult part now, I pray, will reduce the time and impact this virus will have on the vulnerable people in our congregations and communities; being concerned about the welfare of those who are sick and vulnerable is an act of charity that will not be forgotten.

I am sincerely thankful for all concerns about this temporary measure, because it reflects our collective faith that the Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life — the body, blood, soul and divinity of Jesus Christ. Additionally, it reflects our understanding that God desires us to be in relationship and communion with one another. Be assured—these beliefs are not weakened by these temporary measures. Christ is still among us, and we can, and should, still continue our journey of faith even during such times.

Although *public* Mass is suspended for this time, please know that priests throughout our diocese are still privately celebrating the Mass each day, insofar as they are able, for the intentions already determined for your parish. Additionally, confession and anointing of the sick continue as we are able. In short, faith formation endures!

During this season of Lent, we are invited to draw near to God through prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, and although these acts of faith may look different this particular Lenten season, *this is still our call*. I remind you that **there is a dispensation for not attending Mass during this time**. However, it is highly encouraged that all would make a spiritual communion during this time, and if possible, do so while celebrating the Mass through resources such as television, social media, or listening via the radio. There is a developing list of such opportunities on our website, one that we are working diligently to update often. May these resources equip you to continue with faith formation within your homes and families.

This is also an excellent time to engage with the Lord in different forms, perhaps even ones that are new for you. These acts of faith could include making a Holy Hour; praying the Rosary, the Magnificat

or the Stations of the Cross; reflecting on the daily readings; finding time to spend at your parish praying before the Holy Eucharist; or utilizing programs such as FORMED. Prayers can be offered for those who are affected by the pandemic, for those in the medical community treating patients and for wisdom in our scientific community.

Today on this Solemnity of St. Joseph, the protector of families and the Church, Pope Francis invites each of us to accompany him and our brothers and sisters around the world in praying the Rosary (Luminous Mysteries) together at 4:00 p.m. (EDT). All of these forms of devotion and prayer will help us traverse this uncertain time together, as the Body of Christ.

We remember Jesus' trial in the desert for forty days, a time of fasting and spiritual communion with the Father. It was this wilderness time that, ultimately, led to His glorious resurrection and victory over death — the anchor of our hope! Likewise, let us not be disheartened during this temporary "desert," but let us instead find renewed fervor in our faith and continued longing for the joy that is to come.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Steven J. Raica". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross at the beginning.

Most Reverend Steven J Raica
Bishop of Gaylord

To the Faithful:

For your convenience, please find below a list of several remote viewing options for Mass for tomorrow, Sunday, March 15 (the Third Sunday of Lent) and for the upcoming week.

Saturday, March 14, 2020

5 p.m. - Private (closed-door) Mass from St. Joseph Catholic Church in Traverse City at <https://www.stjosephctc.org/11>.

Sunday, March 15, 2020

8 a.m. - Private (closed-door) Mass from St. Mary Cathedral in Gaylord, MI, with Bishop Steven J. Raica presiding, broadcast on TV on Fox Local 32/45. (Also available on the Cathedral website, <https://www.stmarycathedral.org/>, for later viewing.)

8 a.m. - Mass from the Our Lady of the Angels Chapel in Irondale, AL at www.ewtn.com.

9 a.m. - Private (closed-door) Mass from St. Joseph Catholic Church in Traverse City, MI at <https://www.stjosephctc.org/11>.

10 a.m. - Private (closed-door) Mass from the Cathedral of St. Andrew in Grand Rapids at <https://grdiocese.org/diocese/televised-mass/>.

10 a.m. - Mass from the Cathedral of Mary of the Assumption in Saginaw, MI at www.saginaw.org/cathedral-live.

10 a.m. - Mass from the St. Francis Xavier Cathedral in Green Bay, WI at <https://relevantradio.com/faith/daily-mass-video/>

11 a.m. - Private (closed-door) Mass from St. Joseph Catholic Church in Traverse City, MI at <https://www.stjosephctc.org/11>.

12 Noon - Private (closed-door) Mass from the Cathedral of the Most Blessed Sacrament in Detroit, MI at www.aod.org/livemasses and on the Archdiocese of Detroit's Facebook page.

12 Noon – Private (closed-door) Mass from the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C. at <https://www.nationalshrine.org/mass/>.

12 Noon - The 8:00 a.m. Mass from the Our Lady of the Angels Chapel is rebroadcast at www.ewtn.com.

12:45 p.m. - Mass from Christ Cathedral in the Diocese of Orange, CA at <https://relevantradio.com/faith/daily-mass-video/> or at <https://www.facebook.com/ChristCathedralCA>.

2:30 p.m. - Mass *in Spanish* from Christ Cathedral in the Diocese of Orange, CA at <https://www.facebook.com/ChristCathedralCA>.

Daily Masses in the Diocese of Gaylord during the Week of March 16, 2020 (Also available on the websites for later viewing.)

7:00 a.m. – Private (closed door) Mass from St. Mary Cathedral in Gaylord, MI on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday at <https://www.stmarycathedral.org/>.

8:45 a.m. – Private (closed door) Mass on Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from St. Joseph Catholic Church in Traverse City, MI at <https://www.stjosephctc.org/11>.

5:00 p.m. – Private (closed door) Mass from St. Mary Cathedral in Gaylord, MI on Wednesday at <https://www.stmarycathedral.org/>.

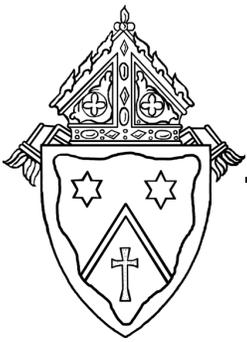
6:00 p.m. – Private (closed door) Mass on Wednesday from St. Joseph Catholic Church in Traverse City, MI at <https://www.stjosephctc.org/11>.

7:00 p.m. – Private (closed door) Mass on Monday from St. Joseph Catholic Church in Traverse City, MI at <https://www.stjosephctc.org/11>.

Also,

Bishop Raica noted in his letter of March 13, 2020 that an optimal moment to make a Spiritual Communion is at the time Mass is celebrated each day. Bishop also suggested that a model prayer to make a Spiritual Communion is as follows:

**My Jesus, I believe that you are present in the Most Holy Sacrament.
I love you above all things and I desire to receive you in my soul.
Since I cannot at this moment receive you sacramentally,
Come at least spiritually into my heart.
I embrace you as if you were already there
And unite myself wholly to you.
Never permit me to be separated from you.
Amen.**



DIocese OF GAYLORD

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March 13, 2020

Dear Brother Priests, Deacons, Pastoral Administrators, Religious and Faithful:

When the disciples were walking to Emmaus, they met up with a stranger who shared the Scripture of the Law and Prophets. What started as a disappointment — uncertainty regarding the present and future — soon became the awareness that the Lord had been with them all along. At table, they concluded so simply: “Stay with us Lord.”

As the novel coronavirus ramps up with increasing health risks to the general population throughout our country and state, and especially to our faith communities, it is necessary to make some difficult decisions to do our part in stemming the spread of this pernicious virus. In order to do so, I have consulted with the Diocesan Consultors, and read the reports from medical and scientific experts about the impact of this virus. Doing the difficult part now, I pray, will reduce the time and impact this virus will have on the vulnerable people in our congregations and communities. Being concerned about the welfare of those who are sick and vulnerable is an act of charity that will not be forgotten. During this season of Lent, our prayer and penance is key as we approach a spiritual response to the pandemic sweeping our country and state.

From Saturday, March 14 through Monday, April 6, 2020, all Sunday and weekday public Masses are suspended throughout the Diocese of Gaylord. Although public Masses are temporarily suspended, the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is available through the various media channels for television, radio, internet, and social media. An optimal moment to make a Spiritual Communion is at the time Mass is celebrated each day. The Sacrifice of the Mass remains efficacious and a grace-filled moment. I ask every priest to celebrate Mass in private for the intentions already determined for your parish, for those who are affected by the pandemic, for those in the medical community treating patients and for wisdom in our scientific community.

In his letter to the faithful of the Archdiocese of Detroit, Archbishop Allen Vigneron, our Metropolitan, suggested this prayer as a model to make a spiritual communion:

*My Jesus, I believe that you are present in the Most Holy Sacrament.
I love you above all things and I desire to receive you in my soul.
Since I cannot at this moment receive you sacramentally,
Come at least spiritually into my heart.
I embrace you as if you were already there
And unite myself wholly to you.
Never permit me to be separated from you.
Amen.*

Typically, in moments of crisis, our faithful look to their priests, their pastoral leaders, their faith and their church as an *anchor of hope*. To that end, **I encourage churches to remain open during the day**. Through private prayer and Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament (located to the main body of the church for social

distancing) we can be reminded of the closeness of Christ and let “heart” speak to “heart.” The pastor or pastoral administrator should be mindful not to exceed the crowd size limitations and social distancing of those in attendance.

It is also our important duty to mourn with those who have passed away. **Funerals may occur provided there are a limited number of persons present** – immediate family and a few friends. People in attendance should sit in a way that respects the “social distancing” guidelines. If this is not possible, consider postponing the funeral or memorial Mass to a later date. **Weddings should observe the same protocols.**

In a similar way, **Baptisms will occur outside of Mass** for the time being with water blessed specifically for the rite.

As this is becoming a moment when we literally have a “field hospital,” the **care for and anointing of the sick** is a very important ministry for priests. Visiting the sick and health care facilities, with due regard to their safety procedures, should be viewed as an important part of our care. This allows us to be with those who are vulnerable, wounded, sick and the dying in order to provide solace, spiritual and sacramental care.

With churches open for prayer and adoration, **I would ask priests to increase their time hearing confessions in the Sacrament of Penance** so we may experience the mercy of Christ. Communal celebrations of the Sacrament of Penance should also be suspended.

As necessary, further updates will be provided as new issues emerge. I entrust each of you to the maternal care and protection of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, the patroness of our diocese, each and every day.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Steven J. Raica". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Most Reverend Steven J Raica
Bishop of Gaylord



STEVEN JOHN

By the grace of God and the Apostolic See

DECREE

Participating in the celebration of Mass on Sundays and Holy days of obligation are key responsibility incumbent upon a Catholic Christian person since it is a precept of the Church. Many faithful come to church weekly to satisfy this obligation (cf. canon 1247). The novel coronavirus medical emergency here in the United States will put our brothers and sisters who are seniors at greater risk. Motivated by a desire for the safety of all the faithful in order to mitigate the effects of this pernicious virus, I hereby dispense all the faithful of the Diocese of Gaylord, and those who find themselves present in the Diocese of Gaylord (whose domicile is elsewhere), from the obligation of attending Sunday Mass and Holy Days of Obligation. The dispensation is effective at the same time as the accompanying letter describing the steps taken to suspend the public celebration of weekday and Sunday Masses in the churches and institutions throughout the Diocese of Gaylord, i.e., March 14, 2020 through April 6, 2020.

The faithful are urged to find an alternative means to fulfill their spiritual obligations by 1) watching or listening to the broadcast of the Mass on television, radio, or other social media streaming; 2) pray the Rosary together or individually; 3) read / reflect for 15 minutes on the Sunday readings; 4) make a visit to the parish church and pray before the Blessed Sacrament; or 5) engage in some spiritual reading during this Lent; or 6) perform an act of charity for someone in need.

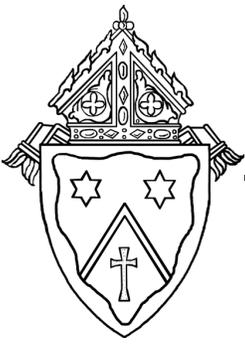
Indeed, the celebration of the Mass is a highlight for many. Being together with the community of faith to hear the Word of God proclaimed and receiving the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of our Lord and Savior fulfills the deepest hungers of the human heart. Pope St John Paul II explained that the "Church draws her life from the Eucharist" (*Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 1). Truly, as *Sacrosanctum Concilium* of the Second Vatican Council noted that the Eucharist is the pre-eminent form of liturgical worship and the "source and summit of the Christian life" (SC, 10). Through it, we worship Almighty God as one body in Christ and draw the graces from it to live our Christian lives more fervently.

In your charity, please remember the priests, deacons, religious, seminarians and lay ecclesial ministers throughout our diocese in your prayers. As we seem to be approaching Good Friday in our lives, we must remain confident that Good Friday was not the end of the story. We await the resurrection of Christ in which he overcomes sin and death! May we remain steadfastly anchored in hope persevere in our discipleship in ever new and engaging ways during this time of uncertainty.

Given in the Pastoral Center in the Diocese of Gaylord on this the 13th day of March, 2020.

Most Reverend Steven J Raica
Bishop of Gaylord

Deacon Kevin Endres
Chancellor



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March 4, 2020

Dear Priests and Pastoral Administrators:

We continue to monitor with concern the questions that are arising about the spread of Coronavirus/COVID-19. As a matter of prudence, the following temporary practices are to be implemented at all liturgies in the parishes, schools, and institutions within the Diocese of Gaylord effective immediately.

- Priests, Deacons, Altar Servers, and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion must wash their hands before Mass begins. An alcohol-based anti-bacterial solution should also be used before and after distributing Holy Communion. (Discern how to do this to best maintain the reverence of the Mass.)
- Ensure all vessels used at Mass, once purified, are thoroughly and appropriately washed and rinsed after each usage.

During all Masses and liturgies: The clergy and faithful should

- Refrain from physical contact during the Sign of Peace and in other instances such as greetings before Mass. (Note: The Sign of Peace can be exchanged without physical contact.)
- Refrain from distribution of Holy Communion to the faithful via the chalice (Precious Blood). Please consider options for any parishioners with celiac disease or gluten sensitivity.
- Encourage the reception of Holy Communion (the Body of Christ) reverently *in open hands* for the time being, given the frequency of direct contact with saliva in the distribution of Holy Communion on the tongue.
- Refrain from holding hands during the Lord's Prayer.
- Drain and sanitize Holy Water fonts, and refrain from using them during this time.
- Assure the faithful that if they are sick, are experiencing symptoms of sickness, or have underlying health issues that make them particularly vulnerable to the effects of the COVID-19 virus, *they are not obliged to attend Mass*, and for those that are sick, out of charity, they ought not to attend. They are encouraged to watch the Diocese's televised Mass on Sundays at 8:00 a.m. on Fox Local 32 and/or to make a spiritual communion. (cf. CCC, #2181)
- Consider making alcohol-based anti-bacterial solution or wipes available for parishioners who come to our churches.

Please also consider making parish or bulletin announcements encouraging best health practices.

These practices are in effect for the time being. We are monitoring the situation and will provide additional updates and guidelines accordingly. Please join in praying for all those who are sick. Whenever possible, add a General Intercession at Mass for those affected by the coronavirus and other communicable diseases.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Steven J Raica
Bishop of Gaylord