



# DIOCESE *of* LACROSSE

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

19 November 2020

Year of St. Joseph

Dear Brothers in Christ,

May the Lord give you peace.

I remain very grateful to Fr. Pace for the timely reminder concerning the reinforcement of our COVID 19 policies. Recently, however, my office has received a number of calls from clergy, as well as the faithful of the Diocese, regarding changes, questions, and comments about our policies. This confusion has prompted me to reinforce the original information you received.

As you are well aware the pandemic is reaching levels of critical concern in our Diocese. Hospitals are reaching capacity, our medical teams are struggling to meet the demands and almost daily I am receiving word from members of the faithful, clergy, and staff who are testing positive, and suffering in various degrees from the virus. In the Spring I published guidelines that I asked each of you to follow and I believe these policies have truly assisted in keeping people safe during this time. As we see the numbers in cases increase and we are soon approaching the Christmas season *I am asking each of you to continue to implement the guidelines with a renewed diligence.* By doing our part in following the guidelines, as previously outlined, we demonstrate the value of everyone working together in charity with a commitment to care for one another. I ask that you please pay particular attention to the following in the coming weeks as we must remain even more vigilant in observing the protocols to allow our faithful to come to Mass without fear of contracting the virus.

- Allowing only 25% capacity of our churches while maintaining social distancing of a minimum of 6 feet between people not living in the same household.
- Face coverings must be worn by all individuals, 5 years and older, present within our Churches and office spaces or attending any function associated with the ministry of the Diocese of La Crosse.
- Holy Water fonts and baptismal fonts must remain empty.
- All Missals, hymnals, prayer cards or other paper resources must be removed from pews.
- A cantor and accompanist are allowed, but choirs should not be used.

I recognize that we each have a different perspective of the pandemic situation but I am confident that we can all agree that we have a responsibility of respecting human life. It is with a heavy heart that I hear of situations within our churches where Pastors are not taking the situation seriously, no matter your personal beliefs I have issued guidelines that I have asked you to follow. The faithful look to you to be the role models in their faith community. Together with God's grace we will eventually emerge from this crisis. Lead your people to trust in God. He has not—nor will He abandon us!

In the hearts of Jesus and Mary, I am

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+William

Your Bishop