

MOST REV. DANIEL R. JENKY, C.S.C.
OFFICE OF THE BISHOP
DIOCESE OF PEORIA



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP
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June 2, 2020

To the priests, deacons, religious, and faithful of the Catholic Diocese of Peoria,

Dear friends in Christ,

I give thanks to God that our Local Church is now able to begin a new phase in emerging, step by step, from a medical quarantine. While outdoor liturgies may continue, by this week, many of our parish churches will have been certified to reopen for Sunday and weekday Masses, limiting the size of any given congregation, keeping safe social distancing, and adhering to strict protocols for sanitizing our worship spaces. Our churches may now also be open for private prayer and adoration. At this time in our experience of a pandemic, those who are vulnerable to infection or simply uncomfortable gathering in larger groups should know in these unusual circumstances they are under no obligation to attend Mass. Some might even consider attending a weekday Mass rather than a Sunday congregation. As always, those who are ill should simply stay home.

I fully comprehend the enormous suffering that the recent "fasting" from the Eucharist has caused for so many believers. We are a Eucharistic Church, and the Mass is our greatest source of grace and the very summit of our lived Holy Communion with the Risen Christ. Let us pray fervently that a later or more virulent outbreak of pandemic would not necessitate a return to greater restrictions on Divine Service. In that sad circumstance, however, because of our recent experience with "drive in" Confessions and Communion and an enhanced use of the media we would perhaps be better prepared to continue pastoral care even in an extreme situation.

I would like to add a special word of thanks and encouragement to our priests who in these difficult days have continued to serve in many creative ways, and especially those who with special training have made themselves available to minister to those ill or dying from the virus. I also wish to thank all those folks who have used their technical gifts to enable others to experience our worship and instruction through live streaming and social media. I would certainly like to praise those families who have regularly come together for shared prayer and reflection, especially on the Lord's Day. May all these good efforts in the service of God and neighbor continue even when our society returns to better health.

After living through these last several months of testing and loss, may we never again take for granted the enormous gift of our parish communities and the infinite consolation of the Mass and the Sacraments. May Our Lady Help of the Sick pray with us and for us in all our needs, and may Almighty God bless and protect all of you.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Daniel R. Jenky C.S.C." with a stylized flourish at the end.

✠Most Reverend Daniel R. Jenky, C.S.C.
Bishop of Peoria