



DIocese OF SUPERIOR OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

May 20, 2020

My dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As the Easter season is rapidly coming to an end, I pray that the hope, joy, and peace of the Risen Christ be with you today and every day. On this the Feast of St. Bernardine of Siena, how fitting it is that we call upon his intercession as we prepare to move forward in this time of pandemic. As a young boy, St. Bernardine helped many people during a time of pestilence. May he help us in our time of pandemic.

For way too long now, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, Governor Evers' "Safer at Home" mandate and the need for social distancing, we have had to suspend our public celebration of the Holy Mass and the reception of the Most Holy Eucharist. My heart goes out to all the faithful who are so patiently anticipating our return to the Sacrament. There is no one who believes that the Eucharist is the "source and summit" of the Christian life any more than I do. Please believe me when I say I want to open wide the doors of churches in welcome to the faithful of the Diocese of Superior as soon as possible. When the State Supreme Court voted to strike down the Governor's orders it only added to the confusion of how we should responsibly move forward.

I firmly believe it would be irresponsible of us to proceed as if there is no credible danger from the coronavirus anymore. Before we return to public celebrations of the Mass, we need to be certain our parishes have the proper precautions in place. These precautions include things such as a sufficient supply of hand sanitizer and other sanitizing supplies and a plan for sanitizing surfaces between services. We also need a plan for maintaining social distancing of 6 feet or more between non-family members and a way to keep our priests and volunteers as safe as possible. At this time, I do not believe most of our parishes are prepared to safely return to the public celebration of the Mass.

As I stated earlier, I truly believe the Eucharist is the "source and summit" of the true Christian Life. Beginning this Sunday, May 24, I am happy to report that, although it is not the full celebration of the Mass, we are going to begin offering Communion Services where you will be able to receive the gift of the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of our Lord and Savior. I understand that this plan may vary from what you have heard other Dioceses doing. After much prayer and planning this is the beginning of the comeback plan for the Diocese of Superior. I want to thank my Brother Bishops of the State of Wisconsin, my Brother Priests and all the faithful who have helped in any way to develop this plan and make it possible in the parishes.

As we begin these services, for parishes that are clustered, the Communion Services will be at the main parish only. The exception to this would be the situations where there are 2 priests serving in a cluster. In those situations, Communion Services can be held in 2 locations provided both have the necessary precautions in place. Depending on how these services go will determine when we will be able to offer Communion Services at other parish locations and the eventual return to the celebration of the Holy Mass.

Before I go any further with this, let me reiterate that the obligation to attend Sunday Mass remains suspended until further notice as well as the obligation to receive Holy Communion at least once during the Easter Season. For those of us who are a little older, this was often referred to “making our Easter duty.”

I also want to encourage those who are older, and anyone who has a compromised immune system, regardless of age to pray about whether you should come to the Communion Service or not. ANYONE WHO HAS A TEMPERATURE OF 100.4 OR ABOVE AND ANYONE WITH FLU LIKE SYMPTOMS, AS MUCH AS YOU MAY WANT TO RECEIVE, PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE STAY HOME. PLEASE DO NOT PUT THE HEALTH OF YOUR SISTERS AND BROTHERS AT RISK. I know it is not the same, but our faith has always taught and upheld the value of a “Spiritual Communion.”

I have attached a copy of the “general instruction” for our Communion Services that went out to the priests and pastoral leaders of your parish. Please note that this is a “general instruction” and the actual services will vary a little as determined by local circumstances. Some mandated things that are not to vary are:


- *all who are going to receive the Holy Eucharist are encouraged to prepare your hearts and minds by first attending a virtual Mass via Facebook, television, or some other means,
- *encouraging/begging ALL to wear masks, priests and all volunteers wearing masks at all times,
- *no more than 9 (including the priest) in the church proper or any other area/room in the church at a time,
- *sanitizer available at doors and other necessary places,
- *maintaining 6-foot social distancing between all non-family members,
- *no one being allowed to spend time in private prayer in the church either before or after receiving the Eucharist,
- *do not unnecessarily touch pews or other surfaces that will require sanitizing.

Thank you in advance for your patience and observance of this directive and for helping to make the Most Holy Eucharist available to the faithful in your area. The reception of the Eucharist is so very important to who we are and who we are to become. I am so happy we are able to start making the Eucharist accessible to you once again.

I know this plan is not the return to our public celebrations of the Holy Mass that we all want. I beg your patience as we responsibly ease our way back. I also ask your prayers for me, the priests, and all the lay faithful who are working so diligently to make our Communion Services a truly holy encounter with our Lord and Savior.

As the great Feast of Pentecost so rapidly approaches, may we all be filled with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and may our loving God keep us healthy and safe.

Yours in the risen Christ,


Most Rev. James P. Powers
Bishop, Diocese of Superior