



Diocese of Rockford

555 Colman Center Drive
P.O. Box 7044
Rockford, Illinois 61125

(815) 399-4300
Fax (815) 399-4769

Office of the Bishop

May 13, 2020

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

For the last eight weeks we have been faced with unprecedented challenges in our faith and in our lives. An unseen and previously unknown contagion has broken out among us and, in Illinois, has claimed over 3,600 lives according to the Illinois Department of Public Health. Others who have survived the coronavirus have gone through great suffering, and the future holds enormous financial challenges for families and individuals who have lost jobs, savings and a life time of work and savings.

On March 17, 2020, I wrote to you noting, “First and foremost, we are people of faith. Our lives of prayer, the sacraments and the practice of our faith come together as our witness to the gift of faith. In that context, the Eucharist is “the source and summit of the Christian life.” (Lumen Gentium 11). At the same time, as citizens we are participants in our society and so we bear our responsibility to contribute to the common good.”

In that context I announced that in order to help slow and hopefully stop the spread of the coronavirus among us, the public celebration of the Mass was to be temporarily suspended. Other limitations, in order to follow the guidance of health officials, were also announced and we have been living that spiritual sacrifice for the last two months.

Today, I write to inform you that we are taking the first steps toward gradually reopening the public celebration of the Mass in the Diocese of Rockford. I do so consistent with the announcement of Cardinal Blase Cupich of Chicago who stated today, “I am heartened to announce that we have reached an agreement with the Office of the Governor on a multi-phase Plan for re-opening our churches for the celebration of the sacraments, private prayer, adoration and Mass.”

Attached you will find an executive summary as well as some details of a two-stage plan for reopening as agreed upon by the Bishops of Illinois. A specific plan adapted to the particular needs of the Diocese of Rockford, and which seeks to ensure the health and safety of all who take part in the Mass and the celebration of the sacraments, will be released shortly.

Our goal at this point is to begin to celebrate Mass in the presence of the faithful, consistent with the guidelines for gatherings, on Monday, May 25. That will be subject to the ability of each parish to fulfill the necessary conditions.

As we begin this important process, I ask for your patience and for your prayers. We have reached a point where reopening is possible because of great sacrifice by all of us. The nature of the virus suggests that there may still be ups and downs in our struggle to return to public life. If we are not cautious and prudent, we are told that the virus could break out again, undoing all of the sacrifices that have been made.

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Above all, our goal is to begin again to safely and publicly practice our faith. This is indeed an essential aspect of our lives. Even if we are only at the beginning, how good it is to be able to open our hearts and our parish doors, both to meet Christ in prayer and the sacraments.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ *David J. Malloy*

Most Reverend David J. Malloy
Bishop of Rockford

Attachment