



Office of the Bishop
Diocese of Saint Cloud

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Dear Pastors,

As you know, we are experiencing a serious resurgence of COVID-19 cases in our state and diocese. The governor and state health authorities have issued additional requirements and guidance to keep us safe. Having recovered from having COVID-19 myself, I can attest to the impact that even a mild case has on a person's health and well-being. This disease poses a serious threat to the people of our parishes and local communities — especially to those who are most vulnerable because of age or underlying conditions.

With this in mind, I want to clarify what my expectations are in light of the governor's new executive order and the latest data from state health authorities. I am requiring all pastors and parish leaders to obey the executive order, adhere to the requirements outlined in our liturgical and ministry protocols, and follow the additional requirements that I outline below.

- **Worship services:** Masses — including for weddings and funerals — and prayer opportunities in our churches are not affected by Gov. Walz's new order. The governor has noted that the recent spread of the virus has not been linked to worship services. All liturgies, however, must continue to follow the protocols we already have in place (see www.stcdio.org/coronavirus-update). Receptions and social gatherings before or after Masses, weddings and funerals remain prohibited.
- **Catholic schools:** Our Catholic schools will continue to follow present evaluation models and other strict protocols to determine when in-person and periods of distance-learning are most appropriate. I cannot stress enough the importance of our Catholic school families following their school's required protocols in order to provide a safe environment for everyone and protect their community. I am grateful to all of our families for following requirements and supporting their school's leadership in this regard.
- **Faith formation, youth gatherings, retreats and related activities:** These types of events pose a greater risk of spreading COVID-19. From now until the end of the year, these in-person gatherings must be suspended and shifted to online meetings or conducted at home.
- **Board and council meetings, social activities, organizational meetings, and related activities.** From now until the end of the year, these in-person gatherings must also be suspended and shifted to online meetings or conducted at home.

I am requiring these measures at this time because I believe they are the best way to protect one another and serve the common good during this very difficult time. I will continue to evaluate the pandemic situation and make changes in the future based on the recommendations of our health authorities and my advisors.

If you have any questions, please send them to Joe Towalski, diocesan communications director, (jtowalski@gw.stcdio.org; 320-258-7624) and he will direct them to the appropriate place.

I ask for your patience, trust and understanding. You continue to be in my prayers.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ Donald J. Kettler
+Donald J. Kettler
Bishop of Saint Cloud