



OFFICE *of the* BISHOP

April 29, 2020

Our Dear People:

Since the arrival of the coronavirus pandemic, Catholics in Iowa have been obliged by civil, scientific, and church authorities to sacrifice the opportunity to receive sacraments and worship in common.

With the lifting of restrictions against certain public gatherings, including religious assemblies, by Governor Kim Reynolds, members of the faithful are understandably renewed in their hope that they might safely return to church and resume some form of regular parish life. Yet the spread of the COVID-19 disease remains a real and present danger. In particular, the health and survival of the elderly and other vulnerable populations is still a grave concern. Many parishioners and priests fall within these groups.

In light of the expectation that positive cases of COVID-19 will peak in Iowa in the next few weeks, we have decided it would be most prudent for now to continue to follow the liturgical restrictions we have in place, including the suspension of public Masses. Without an effective vaccine or widespread testing and contact data that justifies a change in course, we simply are not at a place where we can resume our previous prayer practices.

The suspension of the Sunday Mass obligation remains in effect statewide, and all vulnerable persons, the sick, and those who may have been exposed to the virus are asked to look after their own welfare with the support of those who care for them. We ask parish, school and diocesan staff to continue to minister to the faithful, and the faithful to each other, in ways other than meeting in groups during this difficult time of the pandemic. We strongly encourage parishioners to visit the website and social media outlets of the parishes and schools to stay in touch as we look forward to gathering in person.

We will continue to closely monitor the statewide and respective regional situations through the weeks of May and beyond. When the time comes that we can gather in greater numbers while observing social distance, safe hygienic practices and other precautions without placing one another at serious risk, public Masses and other sacramental celebrations will be allowed to resume.

These days are not easy. We understand that many of you are frustrated with this situation; so are we. We want to celebrate Mass with our parishioners and get back to “normal.” However, we take the advice of Paul: “Rejoice in hope, endure in affliction, persevere in prayer” (Romans 12:12). Take comfort in knowing that Jesus is with us and with you, our faithful.

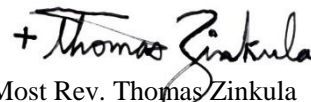
Your Brothers in Christ,



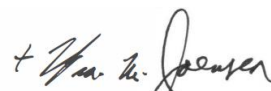
Most Rev. Michael Jackels
Archbishop of Dubuque



Most Rev. R. Walker Nickless
Bishop of Sioux City



Most Rev. Thomas Zinkula
Bishop of Davenport



Most Rev. William Joensen
Bishop of Des Moines