



May 17, 2020

Dear Friends in Christ,

I write to convey my decision to permit entry into Phase 1 liturgical practices for daily Masses **FOR SELECT COUNTIES (only)** within the Des Moines Diocese beginning later this week. After my most recent consultations with our regathering task force and with infectious disease clinicians from both UnityPoint and MercyOne medical staffs, who track all data from the Iowa Department of Public Health and the Centers for Disease Control, **I accept the recommendation that select counties in the Des Moines Diocese have reached a place where the faithful might reasonably regather to celebrate daily Masses (Monday-Saturday morning).**

**I have established Thursday, May 21, 2020, as the first permissible date to resume daily Masses.** This permission is not a hard mandate; it remains left to local priest pastors to decide whether your parish can dutifully fulfill the hygienic cleansing, social distancing, and other guidelines that will best mitigate the risk of further contagion, and thus celebrate public Masses with more than ten persons.

This positive permission extends to parishes in these counties, running roughly from east to west: **Wayne, Lucas, Clarke, Decatur, Madison, Union, Ringgold, Adair, Adams, Taylor, Cass, Montgomery, Page, Fremont, and Harrison Counties. Mills County will be permitted to regather for daily Mass beginning on Monday, May 25, 2020.**

Other counties, on account of the still rising or insufficiently diminished incident of contagion are NOT permitted to enter Phase 1 celebration of daily Mass at this time. **Those counties that are prohibited from celebrating daily Masses with more than ten persons present are: Polk, Warren, Dallas, Guthrie, Audubon, Shelby, and Pottawattamie Counties.** When parishes in these counties reach the point where risk has appropriately abated, I will communicate the Phase 1 permissible date.

Thank you for your close reading of this message and the revised guidelines and graphic posters. Please know of my prayers that God's mantle of protection will surround you and your loved ones in your great desire to commune with Jesus Christ, the Bread of Life.

Faithfully in Christ,  
+Wm. M. Joensen, Ph.D.  
Bishop of Des Moines