



**LETTER FROM BISHOP PATES RE: RETURN TO SUNDAY OBSERVANCE**

June 3, 2021

Dear Friends,

The Diocese of Crookston will join the other five Minnesota dioceses in re-instating the Sunday obligation to attend Mass on July 1 and thus will be effective the weekend of July 3 and 4.

The decision is made in line with the guidance of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Minnesota Department of Health. Especially noteworthy is that as of June 1, the percentage of adults vaccinated in the state of Minnesota was 65%. Heartfelt thanks are to be expressed to those who have taken this step. Because of vaccination, the country has experienced a significant decline in the incidence of COVID-19.

Many may have legitimate reasons to continue wearing masks and other mitigation practices. I ask that our churches make seating accommodations for them. In the same vein, the dispensation from Sunday obligation remains in force for those in special circumstances. A list of these is found in the statewide announcement. In any case, the operative consideration is sound judgment.

Returning to our long-cherished tradition is welcome news. When citing obligation, perhaps the most important is the obligation of the heart. The Eucharistic gathering originated at the beginning of the Church and has continued without interruption to this day. It manifests our relationship with God through Jesus and with one another. We experience God's direction for our lives in the Liturgy of the Word, we become one with Him as his death and resurrection are made present in the Eucharistic Prayer, and we are united with Him through partaking in His Body and Blood.

Under the leadership of Janelle Gergen and Deacon Mark Krejci, a diocesan taskforce has been assembled to work with committees in each parish facilitating "re-uniting in Christ." In each parish, the committee will reach out to encourage and warmly welcome those returning to our Eucharistic community. In a spirit of evangelization, the outreach will not only be to those who have joined us in the past, but also those who are not often among us. Ultimately, this role of encouragement and invitation falls upon all of us. Can we think of a greater gift to extend?

Heartfelt thanks are in order to all who have brought us to this happy moment to "reunite in Christ." My best wishes and prayers are with every member of our diocesan community.

Sincerely Yours in Christ,

MOST REVEREND RICHARD E. PATES  
Apostolic Administrator  
Diocese of Crookston