



Dear Friends in Christ,

With your pastors and clergy in the Des Moines Diocese throughout these pandemic weeks, we have received and shared your appeals, groans, and longing for the resumption of communal celebration of sacraments. I hope it brings relief, peace, and joy for you to receive these much-awaited notifications that follow upon due consultation with our regathering task force and select clinicians:

Pottawattamie County parishes are now permitted to enter Phase 1 with adherence to relevant guidelines for celebration of daily Mass and other sacraments on Tuesday, June 9th. As always, the decision to proceed with liturgical celebrations (presuming that the faithful socially distance from one another, wear masks, and that parishes can observe cleaning guidelines) rests with the local pastors. If all goes well, we anticipate they will move into Phase 2 celebration of weekend Masses June 20-21st, which I will confirm as that date draws nearer.

Dallas, Polk, and Warren County Parishes are now permitted to enter Phase 1 as early as Thursday, June 11th. Pastors may elect to wait until a later date, such as Tuesday, June 16th or beyond, to begin Phase 1 operations. Given the larger

number of parishes, the greater population density, and the prospect of a resurgence as businesses and other venues open and people congregate with less caution, I ask that you await the “green light” for entry into Phase 2, but barring any contraindications, Dallas, Polk, and Warren Counties can expect to resume Phase 2 weekend liturgies on June 27-28th.

Shelby, Audubon, and Guthrie County parishes, having already entered Phase 1, can proceed to Phase 2 celebration of anticipated and Sunday Masses the weekend of June 13-14th.

Other counties who previously were the first wave to enter Phase 1 may enter Phase 2 the weekend of June 6-7th, or are at least permitted to do so at the pastors’ discretion.

An attached document outlines the general guidelines for Phases 2 and 3. There is no present determination of when we will enter Phase 3, but it will almost certainly not be until July.

It needs be said again that **the Sunday Mass obligation remains suspended**, and that vulnerable persons and those who interact with them do well to stay home, even as this poses a continued sacrifice on their part. Please await your own parish’s resumption of Masses, and remember that during Phase 1 and 2, an occasional presence at Mass, and not daily, makes it possible for more parishioners to attend Mass in safe fashion. Practicing these self-disciplines is a grace-filled act of charity for others, who equally hunger for our Eucharistic Lord. There is an attached discernment tool that is a regular reminder to all of us of our need to be honest with ourselves about our health status and our need to be charitable toward others.

Oh, to have finally passed over to this place of greater refreshment and healing, where we can partake again of the fruits of the Resurrection and Pentecost. Let us go rejoicing—with continued vigilance and care for each other—to the House of the Lord!

Faithfully in Christ,

Most Rev. William M. Joensen, Ph.D.