



## Catholic Diocese of Evansville

Office of the Bishop

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May 1, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I know that these past several weeks have been extremely difficult for everyone on many levels as we have endured the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. For Catholics, this time has been particularly burdensome as you have not had the consolation of being able to attend Mass and receive Holy Communion. Like you, your priests and I strongly desire to be able to re-open our churches as soon as safely possible for the public celebration of the liturgy, especially as we see a few dioceses around the country begin to do this.

To this end, I recently established a diocesan ad hoc committee to work on a re-opening plan. As we await guidance from Gov. Holcomb and his staff regarding how and when our state will implement the phased opening provided-for in the Federal guidelines, I have been in regular contact with the other Indiana bishops to consider areas in which we may collaborate in these efforts. Committee members have been reviewing suggestions from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) as well as proposed best practices from other dioceses around the country. We are working to formulate a set of diocesan guidelines for the celebration of Mass and the sacraments to assist parishes as we move through each of the phases of the re-opening process.

In reality, the process of resuming the celebration of public Masses and reopening parish life will be more complicated and painstaking than was the suspension. As you can imagine, we will need to develop and implement a great number of necessary protocols and precautionary measures in our parishes in order to safely open our doors for the liturgy. This may be a long process. For this reason, I ask for your patience as we work together to balance your deeply felt desire for the Eucharist with the concern to protect everyone's health and wellbeing now and in the months to come.

Today, the United States bishops, in conjunction with the bishops of Canada, are re-consecrating our nation to the Blessed Virgin Mary under her title Mary, Mother of the Church, in response to the global pandemic. Please join me in again entrusting ourselves, our diocese, our nation and our world to the loving care and protection of Mary, Mother of the Church. May she intercede for us to her Son that we might be delivered from this pandemic and all its terrible and widespread effects.

Let us continue to pray for the sick and their families, healthcare providers, public health officials and all civic leaders. Know that you are in my prayers, especially at Mass, and I ask for remembrance in yours.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Joseph M. Siegel, DD, STL  
Bishop of Evansville