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**DIOCESE OF VENICE IN FLORIDA**  
*OFFICE OF THE BISHOP*

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June 26, 2020

My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As the Church anticipates the Solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul, please accept my cordial greetings along with the prayer that through the intercession of the Apostles, the Lord will bless you and your family.

As restrictions due to the Coronavirus have been somewhat lessened and, at the same time, confirmed cases of Covid-19 are on the rise in Florida, it is opportune to provide an update as to how the Diocese of Venice is maintaining pastoral vigilance and following public health guidance. The Faithful of the Diocese of Venice are to be commended for their cooperation and compassion during these difficult times. We are all in this together, and your support and assistance are needed and deeply appreciated.

After consultation with the Priests of the Diocese, there are several issues to be addressed which I believe will allow us to remain focused on the health and wellbeing of the Clergy and Faithful of the Diocese, as we move forward.

The dispensation given to all the Faithful from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass will remain in effect until September 1, 2020. Catholics are encouraged to stay at home if ill or are not comfortable returning to public gatherings for the celebration of the Mass. Please check your Parish website or that of the Diocese regarding the live streaming of Masses.

The wearing or not wearing of masks has become a political statement for some. However, politics was not why the Diocese of Venice included face coverings as an essential part of its protocols. Face coverings are essential because of the guidance that wearing a mask lessens the likelihood of transmission of the virus. Therefore, I ask for your cooperation in wearing masks, particularly at Mass and any public gathering at your Parish. Please consider the use of face coverings a mandatory step taken in genuine concern for the wellbeing of our brothers and sisters in Christ.


Many have asked about whether Parish groups can begin to meet again. Our Pastors/Administrators have been asked to use their discretion as to whether small groups who are gathering for prayer or to coordinate ministries may meet safely. Of course, guidance on face coverings and social distancing must be observed. It is not yet time that larger groups assembling for social or fraternal purposes, can meet safely. Please understand that your Priests must use care in determining which groups can meet and those that should not. Your patience and cooperation are appreciated.

Let us remember the importance of prayer for those who are affected by the Coronavirus and for a quick end to the threat associated with the virus. Be assured that Our Merciful Father hears and answers our prayers.

Please know that I empathize with the difficulties being experienced by you during these uncertain times. However, it is so very important that we stay united to safeguard the wellbeing of the Clergy and Faithful of the Diocese, as well as those in the larger community.

This opportunity is taken to extend my Apostolic Blessing to you and your family. May God bless you and keep you safe.

Sincerely Yours in Christ,

  
+ Frank J. Dewane  
Bishop of the Diocese of the  
Venice in Florida

FJD/nml