



CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF FORT WORTH
THE BISHOP'S OFFICE



Pastoral Letter

To All Priests, Deacons, Seminarians, Religious Men and Women,
and Faithful Laity of the Diocese of Fort Worth

July 3, 2020

Dear Friends in Christ,

In reflecting on the celebration of the birth of our great nation, the frequently spoken words of Pope Saint John Paul II came to mind, “Freedom consists not in doing what we like, but in having the right to do what we ought.” As you are aware, Governor Abbott has re-instituted restrictions on those establishments of business that have been unable to maintain compliance with the **three (3) fundamental measures for ensuring the safety of workers and the public: Hygiene/Cleanliness (hand-washing), Physical Distancing, the Use of a Mask or Face Covering.** He has further issued an executive order requiring the wearing of masks and facial coverings with a strong recommendation that masks be worn in church services. It is important to note that what the Governor is addressing is not that these measures are ineffective, it is that people have not been responsible in applying them resulting in adverse effects to our public health and economy.

We as the local church of the Diocese of Fort Worth have been consistently doing this well since May 2, when we returned to the public celebration of Mass, an essential aspect of the exercise of our religious liberty. In my letter to you last week, I reminded you that the circumstances of this pandemic and its effects upon our society remove the obligation to attend Sunday Mass. I also re-emphasized the necessity for the consistent and responsible applications of the three above-listed safety measures and protocols for the sake of the safety of all involved (especially the elderly and the vulnerable) with the celebration of Mass and the other sacraments.

The fact that so many of you have risen to this level of accountability with integrity and even valor does not remove the fact that each of us can grow complacent especially after several months of this pandemic with its accompanying pressures. I strongly urge you to take this weekend and the following weekends to examine our practices at Mass and that we are strictly complying with these measures with a sense of solidarity and charity. In other words, we are accountable to ensure that what we intend to do regarding safety is in fact consistently being accomplished. Some areas to review for complacency include: ushers meeting the faithful at the door and escorting them to their seats with pews marked off, ushers dismissing and escorting people out of church in an orderly way to prevent clustering in small groups, frequent sanitizing, the wearing of masks by the faithful and clergy (when not speaking) throughout the Mass.

THE CATHOLIC CENTER

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Let us continue to strive together to set a good example of how the local church can work together to worship safely amid this pandemic. Please continue to exercise the principle of solidarity in applying these safety measures and we will affect a prophetic message for leadership so needed in our society today. I remain,

Fraternally Yours in Christ,

+ Michael F. Olson

Most Reverend Michael F. Olson, STD, MA
Bishop of Fort Worth

