



May 19, 2021

Office of the Bishop
Diocese of Saint Cloud

214 3RD AVENUE SOUTH - BOX 1248
ST. CLOUD, MINNESOTA 56302
TELEPHONE (320) 251-2340
FAX (320) 258-7618

Dear pastor,

As I noted in my letter to you last Friday, I have been working with my advisors on separate protocols specific to camps, overnight gatherings, Castaway retreats, TEC, Koinonia and similar events. These programs of our diocese — in which groups of people gather for longer periods of time — offer important spiritual formation to youth and adults alike, and I want to ensure they are conducted as safely as possible as we continue to make strides against the pandemic.

Vaccinations are the best approach for making continued progress against the virus and keeping people as safe as possible from its effects. Scientists and official health authorities have assured us that the current COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective. Pope Francis has stated that receiving one of these vaccines is not only permissible according to Catholic moral teaching but also part of our Gospel duty to protect life and care for our neighbors. I agree with what the Holy Father said earlier this year: "I think everyone must take the vaccine; it's the ethical option because you are playing with your health, (your) life, but you also are playing with the lives of others."

I am allowing the programs noted above to restart in their pre-pandemic forms without face coverings or physical-distancing, but I am requiring all staff, volunteers and participants attending these programs to be fully vaccinated as a condition of participation. A person is considered "fully vaccinated" two weeks after receiving their final required dose of COVID-19 vaccine. Proof of vaccination is required. Those who are not yet eligible to be vaccinated, and those who choose not to be vaccinated, cannot attend these optional programs of our diocese until further notice.

I also want to revisit a few items related to liturgy:

- In light of what I noted above, I strongly encourage that only fully vaccinated individuals — including priests — distribute Holy Communion so that all feel safe in receiving the sacrament. This includes individuals who bring Communion to the homebound.
- As I wrote previously, I have heard from individuals who have health and safety concerns about receiving Communion in the hand from Communion ministers who also distribute Communion on the tongue. This is a reminder that I am requesting separate lines for receiving Communion in the hand and on the tongue in the interest of safety.
- Pastors have the authority to institute protocols that are stricter than my requirements if they deem them to be in the best interests of health and safety.

Thank you for all you have done and continue to do to guide our Catholic faithful through this pandemic. Please, if you haven't already, make an appointment to receive one of the available COVID-19 vaccines and encourage your parishioners to do the same. This is how we will ultimately succeed in overcoming the pandemic.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ Donald J. Kettler
+Donald J. Kettler
Bishop of Saint Cloud