



August 28, 2020

Dear Priests, Deacons and Lay Ministers:

Many of you are aware of the amended restriction from the Governor's office that will apply **ONLY** to all locations in Will County and Kankakee County. **Beginning Wednesday, August 26, gatherings at these locations is now limited to the lesser of 25 persons or 25% room capacity.** The restrictions have not changed for the other five counties in our diocese.

Throughout the diocese, these restrictions do not apply to our church services, schools, religious education or youth ministry programs held in accordance with the approved plans reviewed and approved by our reopening teams at the Diocese of Joliet. Please proceed with the present approval arrangements.

As public health officials continue to monitor the pandemic, these restrictions in particular counties are always subject to change and we remind everyone to continue to monitor and follow guidelines from state and local health departments in addition to guidance from our office.

The onset of these revised restrictions provides an opportunity to remind everyone of our meeting/gathering guidance issued to date as we continue to do our part to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

- A full list of this and all prior communications regarding the virus and our policies will continue to be available at <http://www.dioceseofjoliet.org/covid19>.
- While many of us are anxious to return to normal activities, the pandemic continues to represent an extraordinary threat to the health of our employees, volunteers and parishioners. For this reason, when circumstances do not weigh significantly in favor of in-person gathering (as they do with our worship, our classrooms or our office work), I encourage groups to choose to meet virtually. Where in-person gathering is advisable, we encourage accommodation for all those unable to do so.
- Religious services, Catholic schools, our religious education and youth ministry programs all remain in accord with the re-opening plans approved by the Diocese of Joliet. Strict adherence to those approved plans are required for those gatherings to proceed.
- All other programs which are not in one of the three above categories are subject to the rules issued by the State of Illinois, as well as the approval of the local pastor.

- **ALL events and gatherings should involve 6-foot social distancing, mask wearing and regular sanitization of surfaces and frequent hand washing/sanitizing.**
- It is also important that ALL gatherings retain the contact information for attendees, whether by pre-registration or sign-in, for a period of 14 days. The cataloging of our event attendees is what allows us to track possible exposure of the virus in the event that we learn of someone testing positive for COVID-19. So, please encourage those attending to let you know if they test positive for the virus within fourteen days following the event and assure them that their name and identifying information will be kept private.

As always, I remain incredibly grateful for the heroic efforts of our staff, volunteers and all people in the Diocese of Joliet for your continued vigilance and efforts during the pandemic. Thus far we have been blessed because of the cooperation of all. Thank you.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Richard E. Pates".

Bishop Richard E. Pates
Apostolic Administrator
Diocese of Joliet