



November 20, 2020

Dear Brother Priests,

As we approach Thanksgiving, please know of my gratitude for you and the many ways you serve Christ and his people daily. Your steadfast leadership in our parishes, schools, and communities during this pandemic, and your commitment to the sacraments, humble and inspire me to be a better shepherd.

Please allow me to also express my thankfulness for how you have taken seriously over the last eight months our protocols to minimize the risk of spreading COVID-19 among your faithful, your staff, and yourselves. Despite these measures, many of you have had to deal with COVID-19 cases in your parishes and schools, and more than a few of you have been infected, too. I implore you to redouble your efforts to keep people safe by maintaining safe distances, clean common surfaces and reminding people of the Minnesota requirement to wear a mask.

In talking to some of our hospital chaplains and administrators in our Catholic healthcare facilities, it seems that we are at a critical point in the pandemic. Given the alarming surge in COVID-19 admissions to the hospitals and Intensive Care Units in our state, I ask you to continue working with your staff and leadership teams to do all that we can to contain the spread.

Between now and Christmas, I would ask you to focus on providing those services that are truly essential to our mission. Please continue to celebrate Mass and the sacraments, following our safety and sanitization procedures and protocols, but consider postponing or moving into the virtual realm all other parish meetings, groups and initiatives. This would be consistent with the response of our Catholic school leadership, who are continuing to educate our children but pausing sports, Advent and Christmas performances, grandparent's day celebrations, and all other extracurricular activities.

These requests are difficult, but I believe that they are reasonable and for the common good. If by pausing optional activities in our parishes we can do our part to minimize the spread of the virus and keep hospital beds open, then we will be helping not only our at-risk sisters and brothers, but also the thousands of healthcare workers who are risking their health and that of their loved ones every time they go to work. We want to avoid any circumstances that could lead for a call for us to impose any further limitations on attendance at public Mass or otherwise impede our essential sacramental ministry (baptisms, confessions, funerals, weddings, etc.).

As we prepare for Advent, I encourage you to engage your leadership in assessing how your parish can effectively join in solidarity with our sisters and brothers all over the state, by limiting your parish activities to the essentials. I realize that this may look different in each

parish, but I believe this will be our best opportunity to make sure that we will soon emerge from this dangerous phase and that our doors will be open in five weeks to celebrate the birth of Christ.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me, Bishop Cozzens or Father Michael Tix. In the meantime, be assured of my prayers for each of you as you continue to make Christ present through your ministry. I am personally grateful for your example but hope that you will be mindful of the need to take care of yourselves for the good of our flock.

Please join me in continuing to pray for an end to the pandemic, for those who have died and their loved ones, and for those who serve in healthcare and on the front lines.

Mary, Comfort of the Afflicted, pray for us.

Faternally in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Bernard A. Hebda". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

Most Reverend Bernard A. Hebda
Archbishop of Saint Paul and Minneapolis