



March 27, 2022

Dear Friends,

With the onset of the coronavirus pandemic more than two years ago, our goal in the Diocese of Joliet has been to ensure the safety and well-being of all clergy, religious, lay ministers, parishioners, employees and volunteers while providing access to worship and the Eucharist. We have adjusted our safety protocols as COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations increased and then decreased. I want to personally thank you for your diligence in safeguarding the health of our brothers and sisters in Christ.

When the state of Illinois lifted its mask mandate for indoor public places on February 28, we followed suit for all church and office activities. We also removed practically all other precautions, but left in place the dispensation from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass.

The time has come to remove that final provision, and we will do so on Palm Sunday. What better time for us all to come together again than Palm Sunday, which marks the triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem and the beginning of Holy Week.

Of course, if individuals are ill or contagious to others, Canon law allows them to decide for themselves if they should attend Mass.

I am excited the Diocese of Joliet will fully reunite as one body in Christ for the liturgies leading up to Easter and beyond.

I am reminded of the words Pope Francis wrote in *Fratelli Tutti* during the initial months of the pandemic: "Let us dream, then, as a single human family, as fellow travelers sharing the same flesh, as children of the same earth which is our common home, each of us bringing the richness of his or her beliefs and convictions, each of us with his or her own voice, brothers and sisters all."

(Paragraph 8)

Let us welcome home our family with joy and continue to pray for each other.

Paz y bien,

**Most Reverend Ronald A. Hicks**

Bishop of Joliet