



Office of the Bishop

Diocese of Rockford

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February 9, 2021

Dear Monsignor/Father,

I write to you today to inform you that Governor Pritzker has moved Regions 8 and 9 to the State's Phase 4 guidelines. This letter applies only to parishes, schools and Diocesan entities located in Regions 8 and 9 which includes Kane and McHenry Counties. Parishes, schools, and Diocesan entities located in these Counties may implement the Phase 4 guidelines effective immediately.

Phase 4 guidelines for Regions 8 and 9 parishes, school and Diocesan entities:

For each of the below situations, everyone is to continue to wear masks, frequently sanitize hands, and maintain social distancing, and cleaning and disinfecting guidelines should be followed.

1. Governor Pritzker's Phase 4 guidelines do not apply to sacramental gatherings.

Governor Pritzker's Phase 4 guidelines do not apply to sacramental gatherings. Sacramental gatherings include: Masses, baptisms, weddings, funerals, First Holy Communion, Confirmations, confessions, Stations of the Cross, Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, communal prayer service in the Church, recitation of the rosary, Divine Mercy Chaplet, etc. in the Church, Ash Wednesday service in the Church, Holy Week services in the Church, and the annual Reconciliation Day.

To determine the allowable attendance at sacramental gatherings, follow "Back in His Presence" rules which currently permit attendance to a maximum of 30 percent of capacity of the space, provided everyone wears a mask, hands are frequently sanitized, social distancing can be accomplished, and the cleaning and disinfecting guidelines are followed.

2. Non-sacramental in-person meetings and gatherings are permitted on premises with a maximum attendance of 50 persons.

In-person non-sacramental meetings and non-sacramental gatherings on the premises are restricted to a maximum attendance of 50 persons. Non-sacramental meetings and non-sacramental gatherings include RCIA and Adult Formation classes, parent sacramental preparation meetings, finance council, parish council and committee meetings, office staff meetings, Bible study, men's group, and other group gatherings, provided in-person attendance does not exceed 50.

Parishes in their discretion may permit non-parish group meetings and gatherings to resume on the premises, with a maximum attendance of 50 persons. Such groups include AA, Knights of Columbus, Boy Scout and Girl Scout meetings and gatherings, and other groups. See paragraph 4 below for discussion of religious education classes.

3. Continue to have funeral visitations and wakes occur at a funeral home rather than on Church premises.

Funeral visitations and wakes are not sacramental gatherings and, because they usually entail attendance of more than 50 persons, although not all at once, these should continue to be held at the funeral home, not at the Church. Funeral homes have procedures for limiting and staggering attendance at these gathering, to comply with the 50-person maximum (not including staff). If the attendance exceeds this limit, the priest/deacon or bereavement minister is not required to stay to conduct prayers because of the risk it poses to the minister.

4. Schools and Religious Education Programs/Classes for children and/or families.

The Governor's mitigation rules do not apply to schools. Schools are to follow the guidelines of the Diocese's Catholic Education office.

Religious education programs/classes for children and/or families are considered non-sacramental gatherings. Follow the guidelines of the Diocese's Catholic Education Office if your religious education program/classes are held in the parish's school building which currently operates a parish school.

If your religious education program/classes are held in the Church building, the parish office, a school building that does not currently operate a school, or other building, they may be held in-person provided attendance does not exceed 50 persons.

5. The remote working recommendation has been removed.

The Phase 4 guidelines do not contain a recommendation that employees work remotely.

6. Food and beverages are permitted at meetings and gatherings, with restrictions.

Food and beverages at meetings and gatherings are allowed, under the guidelines contained in Bishop Malloy's October 8, 2020 memo. A copy of that memo is attached.

7. Certain Charitable Events are permitted, with restrictions.

Certain charitable events are permitted, under the guidelines contained in Bishop Malloy's October 8, 2020 memo, attached.

This letter will be shared today with all principals and superintendents, department heads, business managers, and Regional DREs. With thanks for your continued cooperation and assistance during this time, I am

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ *David J. Malloy*

David J. Malloy
Bishop of Rockford