Dear Monsignor/Father,

I write to you today to inform you that Governor Pritzker plans to move the State of Illinois to the Bridge Phase between Phases 4 and 5 on May 14, 2021. Parishes, schools, and Diocesan entities may implement the Bridge Phase guidelines in conjunction with the Diocese’s Back in His Presence Guidelines beginning May 14, 2021, provided the State does not delay the implementation.

1. **Governor Pritzker’s Bridge Phase guidelines do not apply to sacramental gatherings.**

   Governor Pritzker’s Bridge Phase guidelines do not apply to sacramental gatherings. Sacramental gatherings include: all Masses, baptisms, weddings, funerals, First Holy Communion, Confirmations, confessions, Stations of the Cross, Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, communal prayer service in the Church, and recitation of the Rosary or Novenas prayed in the Church.

   Beginning May 14, 2021, the maximum attendance at all indoor sacramental gatherings will be increased to 75% percent of capacity of space, maintaining as much physical distance as possible, and continuing to follow the other Back in His Presence rules of registration, wearing masks, hand sanitizing and cleaning and disinfecting.

2. **Indoor, non-sacramental in-person meetings, conferences, and conventions are permitted on premises with a maximum attendance of the lesser of 1,000 persons or 60% of space capacity.**

   In-person non-sacramental meetings, gatherings, and conferences on the premises, either indoor or outdoor, are permitted to have a maximum attendance of 1,000 persons or 60% of space capacity, whichever is less. Continue to adhere to the health department guidelines of the county in which the parish is located by wearing masks, frequently sanitizing hands, maintaining social distancing, and following cleaning and disinfecting guidelines.

   Non-sacramental meetings, conferences, or conventions 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. This section addresses meetings, conferences, and conventions held at a Diocesan facility, parish or school, not those that are held outside this Diocese. If you have specific questions about this section, please contact the Diocese for assistance.

   Additionally, parishes in their discretion may permit non-parish group meetings and gatherings to resume on the premises, with a maximum attendance of 1,000 persons or 60% of space capacity, whichever is less.
Such groups include AA, Knights of Columbus, Boy Scout and Girl Scout meetings and gatherings, and other groups. See paragraph 5 below for discussion of religious education classes.

3. **Graduations.**

The maximum attendance permitted for a graduation depends on the circumstances of the graduation. Based on the Bridge Phase Guidelines and the Diocese’s own Back in His Presence Guidelines, the following applies to graduations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Rule</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mass in conjunction with a graduation ceremony</td>
<td>This is a sacramental gathering; see paragraph 1 of this letter. Maximum attendance is 75% percent of capacity of space, maintaining as much physical distance as possible, and continuing to follow the other Back in His Presence rules of registration, wearing masks, hand sanitizing, and cleaning and disinfecting.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Baccalaureate Mass promptly followed by a graduation ceremony</td>
<td>This is a sacramental gathering; see paragraph 1 of this letter. Maximum attendance is 75% percent of capacity of space, maintaining as much physical distance as possible, and continuing to follow the other Back in His Presence rules of registration, wearing masks, hand sanitizing, and cleaning and disinfecting.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Baccalaureate Mass with graduation ceremony at a different date or time</td>
<td>This is a sacramental gathering; see paragraph 1 of this letter. For the Baccalaureate Mass, maximum attendance is 75% percent of capacity of space, maintaining as much physical distance as possible, and continuing to follow the other Back in His Presence rules of registration, wearing masks, hand sanitizing, and cleaning and disinfecting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indoor graduation ceremony without a Mass</td>
<td>This is a non-sacramental meeting; see paragraph 2 of this letter. Maximum attendance of 1,000 persons or 60% of space capacity, whichever is less. Adhere to the health department guidelines of the county in which the parish is located by wearing masks, frequently sanitizing hands, maintaining social distancing, and following cleaning and disinfecting guidelines.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ticketed, seated, outdoor graduation ceremony without a Mass</td>
<td>This is an outdoor spectator event; see paragraph 8 of this letter. Maximum attendance of 60% of space capacity. Adhere to the health department guidelines of the county in which the parish is located by wearing masks, frequently sanitizing hands, maintaining social distancing, and following cleaning and disinfecting guidelines.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-ticketed outdoor graduation ceremony without a Mass</td>
<td>This is an outdoor spectator event; see paragraph 8 of this letter. Maximum attendance of 30 persons per 1,000 square feet. Adhere to the health department guidelines of the county in which the parish is located by wearing masks, frequently sanitizing hands, maintaining social distancing, and following cleaning and disinfecting guidelines.</td>
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4. **Funeral visitations and wakes on Church premises.**

Funeral visitations and wakes are not sacramental gatherings. They may resume on Church premises with a maximum attendance of 60% of space capacity. Continue to adhere to the health department guidelines of the county in which the parish is located by wearing masks, frequently sanitizing hands, maintaining social distancing, and following cleaning and disinfecting guidelines.

Persons wishing to attend the funeral visitation may wait outdoors for their turn, if necessary. The maximum attendance outdoors is 500 persons with social distancing.

5. **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 a maximum attendance of 60% of space capacity. Continue to adhere to the health department guidelines of the county in which the parish is located by wearing masks, frequently sanitizing hands, maintaining social distancing, and following cleaning and disinfecting guidelines.

6. **Youth and Young Adult Ministry Activities, and Bishop Lane Retreat Center operations.**

Parishes, schools, and Diocesan ministries and facilities may continue to hold in-person youth and young adult activities onsite and in the local community. Beginning May 14, 2021, they may also hold them outside the Diocese.

For all activities involving youth, the Diocese’s *Guidelines for Youth and Those Working with Youth* and *Code for the Pastoral use of Technology and Social Media* must be followed. Both are online at the Diocese of Rockford website, under documents and forms, scrolling to Safe Environment. The password for both documents is #safedio.

a. **Activities held in this Diocese at a Diocesan parish, school, or Diocesan facility:**

Youth and young adult ministry activities include Jeremiah Camp, vocations camp, Vacation Bible School, Totus Tuus, summer camps, service projects, retreats, mission trips, parish movie night, and similar activities and events.

Most youth and young adult activities will follow the guidelines for non-sacramental meetings, conferences, and conventions at paragraph 2 of this letter. For participant sports activities, follow the guidelines for Recreation at paragraph 9 of this letter. If the activity is the youth group’s attendance at an outdoor spectator event or a festival, follow the guidelines at paragraph 8 of this...
letter. If the activity is purely social without a formation component, follow the guidelines at paragraph 10 of this letter. For activities with food and beverage, follow the guidelines at paragraph 11 of this letter. Use your best judgment in determining what activities are recreational, social, etc. For activities taking place at the Bishop Lane Retreat Center, follow the guidelines implemented by Bishop Lane Retreat Center.

b. Activities held in this Diocese but not at a Diocesan parish, school, or facility; and Activities held outside this Diocese:

Parishes, schools, and Diocesan ministries and facilities may resume offering summer youth and youth ministry activities that are not held on the premises of a Diocesan parish, school or facility. These activities are permitted to occur in or outside the Diocese, under the following guidelines:

The parish or school sponsoring the off-campus experience is responsible for ensuring that all Back in His Presence Guidelines and safety protocols are followed, including the required use of masks, social distancing, frequent handwashing and cleaning and disinfecting. These rules apply even if a third-party vendor is used for the activity and does not adhere to the rules. For example, if a parish and its youth are attending a youth conference, and the youth conference host does not require masks to be worn, all youth participants, and adult supervisors and volunteers must nonetheless wear masks.

c. Activities In the Diocese and Outside the Diocese involving Bus Transportation:

Bus transportation to an activity is permitted provided the required distancing protocols of three feet within a student cohort and six feet outside of a student cohort are followed. If multiple cohorts are present on a bus, cohorts must be separated by a minimum of 3-4 empty rows on the bus. Bus windows should be opened to increase ventilation. Individual carpools to the activity is not recommended, but single family transportation is permitted and encouraged, when possible.

d. Activities In the Diocese and Outside the Diocese that include Overnight Stays:

Overnight stays at activities in the Diocese and outside the Diocese are permitted only for students aged sixteen (16) years or older. Masks are not required while sleeping.

7. Offices.

Employees working remotely should resume working at the workplace. Exceptions include those who are remote working as an accommodation due to a disability, and those required to quarantine due to a COVID-19 diagnosis or possible exposure to COVID-19.

The Bridge Phase guidelines state that offices are to have a maximum attendance of 60% capacity. In considering what an office is, do not exceed 60% of the number of persons who can comfortably fit in the parish center building, and do not exceed 60% of the number of persons who can comfortably fit in each individual office inside the parish center building. Sixty percent (60%) capacity for the parish center is not interpreted to mean 60% of the number of employees who normally work at the parish center building. It is hoped that all of your office employees are able to work at the office. Continue to adhere to the health department guidelines of the county in which the parish is located by wearing masks, frequently sanitizing
hands, maintaining social distancing, and following cleaning and disinfecting guidelines.

8. **Outdoor Festivals and Outdoor Spectator Events.**

   Festivals may be held at parishes, schools, and Diocesan entities with a maximum attendance of 30 persons per 1,000 square feet. Follow the rules of paragraph 11 below for festivals or outdoor spectator events with food and beverage.

   Outdoor spectator events with *general admission* may be held at parishes, schools, and Diocesan entities with a maximum attendance of 30 persons per 1,000 square feet.

   Outdoor spectator events that are ticketed and where attendees are seated may be held at parishes, schools, and Diocesan entities with a maximum attendance of 60% of space capacity.

   For festivals and outdoor spectator events, continue to adhere to the health department guidelines of the county in which the parish is located by wearing masks, frequently sanitizing hands, maintaining social distancing, and following cleaning and disinfecting guidelines.

9. **Recreation.**

   Indoor recreation is permitted with a maximum attendance of 100 persons or 50% capacity of the space, whichever is less.

   Outdoor recreation is permitted provided each group does not exceed 100 persons, and multiple groups outdoors is permitted. The Governor’s office has not defined or given examples of what is considered recreation.

   Continue to adhere to the health department guidelines of the county in which the parish is located by wearing masks, frequently sanitizing hands, maintaining social distancing, and following cleaning and disinfecting guidelines.

   Follow the rules of paragraph 11 below for recreation events with food and beverage.

10. **Social Events.**

    Indoor social events are permitted with a maximum attendance of 250 persons, provided social distancing can be accomplished.

    Outdoor social events are permitted with a maximum attendance of 500 persons.

    Continue to adhere to the health department guidelines of the county in which the parish is located by wearing masks, frequently sanitizing hands, maintaining social distancing, and following cleaning and disinfecting guidelines.

    Coffee and Donuts after Mass is permitted provided both are served by an individual server. Follow all the food and beverage rules in paragraph 11 below for consumption of coffee and donuts and for food consumption at social events.
Parishes, schools, and Diocesan facilities may resume renting space to parishioners for wedding receptions, Quinceaneras, baptism receptions, and similar activities and events. The Facilities Use Policy and Facilities Use Agreement will assist you. Both documents are online at the Diocese of Rockford website, under documents and forms, scrolling to Property Insurance. The password for those documents is dmalloy!

11. **Food and beverages are permitted at meetings, conferences, social gatherings, festivals and recreational events, with some restrictions.**

   Food and beverages at meetings and conferences continue to be permitted under the following conditions: food and beverage may best be in single serve containers, such as a boxed lunch or refreshments individually wrapped, and using disposable utensils and plates. Additionally, beginning May 14, 2021, food prepared in the parish or school kitchen or brought in by a catering company or a restaurant for consumption at meetings and conferences on the premises is also permitted, provided the guidelines below, in this section are followed.

   Parish or school sponsored or fund raising events that require preparing food, such as fish fries, spaghetti dinners and/or food for the poor, may be prepared in parish kitchens, for drive-up, “grab & go” and/or drop-off distribution, and beginning May 14, 2021, for consumption or dining on the premises, provided the guidelines below, in this section are followed.

   All people who prepare or distribute the food are to be screened to assure they are free of any contagious illness, must be properly trained in food preparation protocols per their local health department, and wear PPE at all times (e.g. mask, gloves, etc.). Continue to adhere to the health department guidelines of the county in which the parish is located by wearing masks, frequently sanitizing hands, maintaining social distancing, and following cleaning and disinfecting guidelines.

   Beginning May 14, 2021, indoor consumption of food and beverages as well as sit down dining at meetings, conferences, social gatherings, funeral luncheons, priest ordination luncheons, employee retirement lunches, office celebrations, and other similar events is permitted on Church premises, with food prepared in the parish or school kitchen or brought in by a catering company or restaurant, provided dining tables do not exceed parties of 10, tables are at least 6 feet apart, and each person is served his or her meal on his own plate, and a server brings the plates to the table. Family style eating, buffet style serving, potluck meals, and food brought from home are not permitted at this time. Masks should be worn by all diners except during the meal.

   Outdoor food consumption at festivals, recreational events, and indoor and outdoor spectator events is permitted under the following guidelines: parish and school concession stands are permitted. Food in single serve commercially packaged containers is permitted as is food prepared in parish or school kitchens or outdoors on grills is permitted for consumption outdoors.

   All people who prepare or distribute the food at these outdoor events are to be screened to assure they are free of any contagious illness, must be properly trained in food preparation protocols per their local health department, and wear PPE at all times (e.g. mask, gloves, etc.). Commercial food trucks are permitted on the premises. In these outdoor situations where patrons walk up and retrieve their own food, patrons may eat at outdoor tables provided the maximum allowed is parties of 10 per table, with all tables being at least 6 feet apart.
Indoor dining while standing, is permitted on Church premises with a maximum attendance of 30% of capacity of the space.

Outdoor dining while standing is permitted on Church premises with a maximum attendance of 50% of capacity of the space.

Consumption of food prepared at a parishioner’s home and brought to the premises is not allowed to be consumed indoors or outdoors on the premises at this time. Potluck meals are not permitted indoor or outdoor on the premises at this time.

A parish meeting, conference, social gathering, retirement sendoff, and other parish, school or Diocesan events held off premises at a restaurant or other commercial establishment which includes food consumption is subject to the rules in place at that establishment.

12. Certain Charitable Events are permitted, with restrictions.

Food pantry or seasonal charitable collections (groceries, clothing items, Christmas gifts, etc.) for distribution continue to be permitted. Collection of food items is to be limited to unopened boxes, cans and/or other items in their original packaging.

The selling on church or school property of Christmas wreaths or packaged food such as popcorn by the Boy Scouts or other groups, and the sale of Christmas trees by the Knights of Columbus or other groups continues to be permitted provided the protocols are followed: social distancing, and mask and glove wearing by the vendor and mask wearing by the buyers. Bake sales on Church premises of food prepared at home are not permitted on the premises at this time. Bake sales of food commercially prepared and commercially wrapped and unopened are permitted.

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
Bishop of Rockford