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## DIocese OF VENICE IN FLORIDA

### OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

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August 26, 2020

My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

During the month of September, as Holy Mother Church devotionally commemorates Our Lady of Sorrows, allow me to express my ongoing concern for the wellbeing of the Faithful of the Diocese of Venice. Through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, may you and your family be uplifted in hope as together we face the challenges of the Covid-19 Pandemic.

Subtle signs of hope are emerging. For example, our Catholic Schools were able to open. The Clergy and Faithful of the Diocese have done commendable work in promoting safety. As a result, Church attendance is gradually improving. More of the Faithful, feeling the urgent need for the Holy Eucharist, have decided it is safe to return to worship in person. With your fellow citizens, you are adjusting to safety measures as you shop, return to restaurants, and resume much of your normal activities. Data about the Coronavirus, while not indicating the threat is over, appears to be slowly moving in a positive direction.

There is still a need to protect those most at risk, persons in convalescent homes or with serious health conditions as well as the elderly. For this reason, after consultation, the dispensation given to all the Faithful, from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass, will be extended in the Diocese of Venice until All Saints Day, November 1, 2020. Also, live streaming of the Mass will continue during this time.

The continuation of this extraordinary measure allows those who are sick to feel comfortable staying home as well as helps the vulnerable avoid the risk of larger gatherings. It is hoped that those who are healthy and involved in other activities while observing the necessary precautions will, despite the dispensation, return to their Parishes for Sunday Mass. Our Parishes are safely celebrating the Holy Eucharist with a congregation. If necessary, Parishes could adjust Mass schedules to allow for the observance of Covid-19 protocols and safely accommodate those who wish to attend Sunday Mass. As Catholics, our worship is not an individual exercise. Rather, it is the way of experiencing communion with God and unity with our brothers and sisters.

Please remember the importance of being united in prayer. Your prayers bring needed comfort to those affected by Covid-19 and inspire you to practice the virtues of Faith, Hope, and Love. Through prayer we manifest empathy and show solidarity with all who are engaged in a physical or spiritual battle with the Coronavirus.

Your understanding and cooperation in these matters has been greatly appreciated. Let us continue to remain safe, observe the protocols about face-coverings, carefully wash hands, and maintain safe distances. In addition, you are encouraged to extend a helping hand to your neighbors in need of hope or healing. No doubt, there are challenging times ahead. Still, we can face these days with faith and courage because Our Lord is with us, and Our Lady and the Saints intercede for us.

Be assured of my prayer for the wellbeing of the Faithful, as well as the prayers of our Priests. May God bless and protect you and your family.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ Frank J. Dewane  
Bishop of the Diocese of  
Venice in Florida