

ROOT RIVER CATHOLICS

St. Joseph, Rushford – St. Mary, Houston – St. Peter, Hokah
Tri Parish Office
P.O. Box 355
Hokah, MN 55941

July 24, 2020

Brothers and Sisters,

Greetings in the Lord.

I hope that you have been enjoying the summer. It is a great time of the year to enjoy the beauty of God's creation. We are so blessed living in the Root River Valley, to have the beauty of God's creation surrounding us and giving us many opportunities to enjoy that beauty with family and friends. I hope that you are finding some peace of mind and a little relief from the concerns of the day in the beauty of the bluffs, fields, rivers and streams of our area.

Amidst all of this natural beauty, we do have the daily concerns of family and work along with the greater concerns of our society and country. Do not become discouraged. Jesus Christ is with us and desiring to enter into any and all of the trials and struggles that we meet each day. Let your daily prayer call on Jesus for guidance, strength and hope. Then, trust that He who died and rose from the dead for us will be with us and send others to support and help us in the challenges of each day. I know that I have found encouragement, strength and hope among all of you, and I know that is the presence of Jesus. When I have needed encouragement and hope, he has given me, from among all of you, someone to come forward to help or offer a word of encouragement. I am very blessed by your witness of faith! Thank you!

I am writing to you to announce that Bishop Quinn, our bishop here in the Diocese of Winona-Rochester, has written to all the priests to inform us of a revision in the Protocols for the Celebration of Public Mass. You can find the complete text of the revised protocols at <https://www.dowr.org/img/statements/ProtocolsforResumingMass-2020-07-23.pdf>. The revision brings one new key change and can be found at #7 in the revised protocols. This revision is the bishop's response to Governor Walz's Mask Mandate that goes into effect on July 25, 2020. **The revised protocols now mandate the wearing of a face mask to attend public Mass within the Diocese of Winona-Rochester.** I would ask that you respect the bishop's mandate and trust that he has our best interest at heart. He is our shepherd and gives us the necessary guidance for our life of discipleship in Jesus Christ.

Someone once told me that the only constant in life was change. They were half right. The living out of our lives of faith in Jesus Christ go through times of change. But, God the Father, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit never change. Our God continues to love us and give us life through His Church and the shepherds he gives to us to guide us in the life of faith. We need to remember this simple and profound fact. The times and conditions of our lives change. The God of our faith that brings us hope, strength, encouragement, peace and joy never changes. Trust yourself to God and live the life he gave you, enjoy the natural beauty of the world that surrounds us, and live deeply in the love of family and friends. They are God's gift to us as his daughters and sons.

God bless all of you,
Fr. Tom