



## **Diocese of Madison**

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### **Retired priest tests positive for COVID-19; few with contact to be tested and quarantined**

MADISON — On Monday and Tuesday of this past week, a number of the priests of the Diocese of Madison gathered, some online and some in-person, for an annual opportunity to pray together and to conference. Typically, this gathering takes place over the course of four days and is held at a hotel, with no virtual option. This year's assembly was moved to a large parish hall, was reduced to two shortened days, and was broadcast online for those priests who wished to attend virtually. Further, appropriate COVID precautions were utilized, including social distancing, regular sanitization, and the wearing of masks.

Following the assembly, one of the retired priests who chose to attend the gathering undertook what, for him, is a weekly COVID test (owing to his work with a retired population). Last night we were notified that he received a positive test result. He still has no symptoms and we are encouraging him to get re-tested. His exposure to other priests was very limited and he wore a mask for the majority of the gathering. Nevertheless, the Diocese of Madison is urging a super-abundance of caution. Today, the diocese reached out for consultation and guidance from Public Health Madison & Dane County. This expert advice has proved invaluable and in following their counsel, a few extra precautionary measures are being taken.

Clearly an emphasis is being placed on reaching out to the small pod of priests with whom he had contact. They have been asked to get tested themselves and to quarantine. In addition, out of that super-abundance of caution, we are asking all priests who were present, even if they had no contact with the positive-testing, retired priest, to limit their interaction and proximate contact with their parishioners, in as much pastorally possible, for the next 10 days, as well as to monitor for any symptoms, in addition to existing COVID protocols.

If there are any changes in parish Mass schedules as a result of these precautions, pastors will communicate those with their parishioners.

It's important to note that no priests who were present at the assembly are exhibiting any COVID symptoms and no other priest, besides the one retired priest, has tested positive at present. We greatly appreciate the competent guidance offered by Public Health Madison & Dane County, as we continue to provide for the spiritual needs of the people of the diocese, while at the same time always cautiously considering the vulnerable in our communities.

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