



DIOCESE OF SUPERIOR OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

June 3, 2020

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

As we move once again into Ordinary Time, I pray you still feel in your hearts and know in your heads the hope, joy, love, peace, power and strength of the Easter Season and the great Feast of Pentecost. Today it is with great joy that I write once again to update you on our Diocesan plan to resume the public celebration of the Holy Mass.

This has been a very painful and trying time for all of us. As I write this, I am staring at letters I have received from you, the faithful throughout the Diocese. Many of the letters are ones of frustration that we ever suspended Masses and others cautioning me that we are trying to open way to soon. How I wish there had been some way to satisfy everyone's wants, not only these past weeks, but also as we move forward as a Diocese.

From the information I received regarding the Communion Services the weekends of May 23-24, and 30-31, everything seems to have gone smoothly. There does not appear to be any major changes needed before we can safely begin to resume the public celebration of the Holy Mass.

At this time, I am happy to announce that **IN THOSE PARISHES THAT ARE READY**, we will officially begin the public celebration of the Mass the weekend of June 6-7. **IN ORDER TO BEGIN CELEBRATING MASS, PARISHES MUST BE ABLE TO COMPLY WITH THE REQUIREMENTS LISTED IN THIS LETTER.** Parishes will be opening for Masses as the Priests/Leaders serving them feel they are ready. In clusters, this will probably mean a gradual opening of the smaller parishes. I beg you to be patient and respect your Priest's/Leader's decision to open or not. Their decisions are being made with your best interest in mind.

For those places that feel they are ready to open, Priests may begin celebrating weekday Mass this week if they wish to. Check your parish website or other parish information source to see if your parish will be opening or if there will be a daily Mass this week.

Before going into the guidelines, I want to once again state:

1. **THE DISPENSATION FROM THE OBLIGATION TO ATTEND SUNDAY MASS REMAINS IN FORCE.**
2. **ANYONE WITH FLU LIKE SYMPTOMS OR A TEMPERATURE OF 100.4 OR MORE, PLEASE STAY HOME!**

3. Any At-Risk person, those who are older and all who have underlying health issues such as respiratory health issues or a compromised immune system, are encouraged to remain at home and continue to celebrate Mass virtually as you have been, making a Spiritual Communion. I am asking those Priests who have been livestreaming Mass these past weeks, please continue, if possible.
4. PLEASE – PLEASE WEAR A MASK.

I AM NOT FORCING ANY PRIEST WHO MIGHT BE AT-RISK FOR ANY REASON TO BEGIN OFFERING PUBLIC CELEBRATIONS OF THE MASS. I BEG YOU TO RESPECT THEIR RIGHT TO CHOOSE TO REMAIN SAFE. In these situations, we will do our best to find a substitute Priest, keeping in mind that all our retired Priests are in the At-Risk group. Due to this, in some clusters, we may need to look at Communion Services for a time. Again, I beg your patience and understanding if this should have to happen.

RETURN TO MASS GUIDELINES AND DIRECTIVES, BEGINNING THE WEEKEND OF JUNE 6-7.

1. Attendance is limited to a maximum of 25% of total occupancy as established by the local municipality with the proper 6-foot social distancing between persons not living in the same household unless a local authority has implemented a more stringent order. Ushers or other volunteers must be instructed not to let more people than the calculated number of people enter. Parishes may want to use some-kind of a pre-registration to aid in this.
2. All participants are asked to wear masks. Ushers, greeters, and other volunteers MUST wear masks and the wearing of gloves is highly recommended. The 6-foot social distancing rule MUST be maintained.
3. Volunteers must be trained on how to help people find a pew. There must be a minimum of 6' between pews being used. This will mean only every second or third pew being used. Intervening pews should be cordoned off, both for the sake of social distancing and reducing the areas needing to be sanitized between Masses. Please know that you most likely will not be sitting in 'your' pew.
4. As much as everyone will want to see each other, please do not allow people to congregate in church foyers or other indoor areas either before or after Mass.
5. Signage must be placed at the entrances reminding anyone with a fever or flu-like symptoms must not to enter the church. Where possible, the number of entrances and exits should be limited as much as possible. Also, weather permitting, doors should be propped open to avoid unnecessary touching of door handles.
6. Baptismal and Holy Water fonts must remain empty.
7. All Missals, hymnals, papers, and pencils are to be removed from the pews. Printed worship aids are not to be used.
8. Hand sanitizer must be available at all entrances and exits. It should also be available for people to sanitize their hands just prior to receiving the Eucharist.
9. There should not be an entrance, offertory, or recessional procession.

10. Collection baskets or other appropriate containers can be placed at the entrances/exits of the church for people to drop their envelopes and donations in. The offertory collection taken up with long-handled baskets is allowed, but collection baskets are NOT to be passed person-to-person down the pew. Ushers are to wear masks and sanitize their hands after taking up the collection.
11. Priests, Deacons and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion MUST wear masks and sanitize their hands immediately before and after distributing Holy Communion. They must also sanitize their hands immediately after coming in contact with a communicant, before distributing to the next person.
12. Priests and Deacons can decide whether they want to wear masks at other times during the celebration as they are over 12-15 feet from the congregation. The 6-foot distancing MUST be maintained in the sanctuary.
13. To reduce possible exposure, only the minimum number of persons possible should assist at Mass. For example, NO altar servers, only 1 reader doing all the readings and the Prayers of the Faithful if no Deacon is present. All liturgical ministers must wash/sanitize their hands before and after Mass. You may want to copy the reading for the Lector so as to avoid having to sanitize the Lectionary.
14. Piano or organ music alone is suggested at this time. However, a cantor and an accompanist are allowed but NO choirs or congregational singing at this time. Mass parts are to be spoken so as not to elicit a sung response by the people. If it is not sung, the Gospel Acclamation ("Alleluia") should be omitted.
15. There is no presentation of the gifts.
16. The Priest does the Lavabo Rite by himself.
17. The paten the Priest will use should have only the host he will use for the elevation and is to be totally consumed by the priest when he receives Communion.
18. When the hosts for distribution are placed on the altar, they are to be at a distance far enough from where the priest stands for the Prayer of Consecration so as to prevent any unnecessary contact.
19. The Sign of Peace is omitted. When the celebrant says, "The peace of the Lord be with you always," and the people have responded, "And with your spirit," the celebrant forgoes the invitation to offer a Sign of Peace and proceeds immediately to the "Lamb of God."
20. In most churches, Holy Communion will be distributed only from the main, center aisle. In this case, one side of communicants at a time are to be ushered forward, ever aware of the 6-foot distancing between different households. 6-foot markings on the floor would help facilitate this. There should only be 1 Communion minister.
21. In those places where the blessing of young children has become the tradition, parents please help explain to your children that this cannot be done at this time. Other than children, people not receiving Holy Communion should remain seated.
22. Communion is to be distributed by the Priest or Deacon only. If the Priest is in a high-risk category (either by age or preexisting condition) and no Deacon is available, they may designate a trained Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion to take their place.

23. The faithful should be reminded that no one is obligated to receive Holy Communion and the benefits of making a Spiritual Communion should be promoted.
24. Communicants are to leave their masks (and gloves) on until they are about to receive the Eucharist. Gloves, if worn, must be removed before receiving the host.
25. Hand sanitizer should be available for the people to use before receiving Holy Communion.
26. Communion will be distributed in the hand only.
27. If the minister of Holy Communion makes inadvertent contact with a communicant, they must purify their hands before distributing to the next person.
28. If deemed prudent or necessary, the distribution of Holy Communion may be done after Mass has concluded as a dismissal. This would apply especially in those places without side isles. Depending on whether there is a convenient front door or not, Communion could be distributed either from the front or back of the church. Also, if it is determined that distributing after Mass would help facilitate the dismissal, it is permitted.
29. After Communion, the remaining Blessed Sacrament should be put in the tabernacle and the sacred vessels should be purified as always.
30. After the Prayer after Communion, an announcement should be made with directions for an orderly exit with proper distancing. You may want to have ushers release the faithful pew-by-pew as is often done at weddings, beginning with the back pews.
31. After everyone is gone, all high traffic areas need to be cleaned before the next service. Special attention needs to be given to areas such as door handles or push bars, handrails, pew tops, restrooms, Lectionary, Missal, microphones, and other items used in the celebration.

In closing, I want to once again ask your patience and understanding as we gradually return to the great gift of the Holy Mass. Don't be surprised when the church doesn't look exactly like it did the last time you were there. Let us give thanks, praise, glory and honor to our God as we can at this time; and let us surrender ourselves in the loving arms of the Crucified Risen Christ who offers us the gift of Himself – Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity. As we rapidly approach Holy Trinity Sunday, may the blessing of our Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit come down upon you and remain with you forever.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Most Rev. James P. Powers
Bishop, Diocese of Superior