

Updated – May 18, 2020

Directives for reopening

FROM – Bishop Mitchell Rozanski

I was pleased to learn that the opening of churches will be part of the first phase of the state's reopening measures. In recent days we have asked parishes to begin planning for their reopening, taking into account limited capacity and social distancing, as well as cleaning procedures after every public use of the church.

It is important that our churches must be in full compliance before we resume public Masses. With that in mind I am issuing the following directives.

Parishes will be allowed to resume public Masses this Saturday, May 23 with the first vigil Mass after 4:00pm only if they have provided the Office of the Bishop written assurance that they have met all the state, municipal and diocesan guidelines, and received a response giving permission to resume.

It is not unreasonable that some parishes may require additional time and therefore not open until the following weekend, May 30/31.

The previous diocesan restrictions and state guidelines will continue including:

- Omission of the Sign of Peace
- No communion by the cup
- Communion in the hand only
- Holy Water fonts to remain empty and covered
- Social distancing (6ft minimum) to be abided by at all times
- Masks will be required
- [Diocesan guidelines issued May 15, 2020](#)

Parishes may add weekend liturgies to accommodate the limited allowed capacity, but not before 4:00pm on Saturday.

Parishes should limit the number of persons involved with liturgy to the priest, a deacon, lector, organist and a cantor- no choir. Eucharistic ministers should only be used to the extent they are needed. And social distancing in the sanctuary must be maintained. For the time being no altar servers.

All members of the congregation need to wear masks and they must put them on prior to leaving their vehicle, with a few exceptions:

- Children under the age of two should not wear masks.
- Parents should judge for children between the ages of two and five whether they should wear a mask.
- All people who claim an exemption because of health can forego wearing a mask. They do not have to provide documentation.
- The priest and others with him in the sanctuary do not need to wear masks in the sanctuary as long as strict socially distancing is maintained. They do have to wear masks when assisting with the distribution of Holy Communion.
- We ask that those coming to our churches bring their own hand sanitizer if at all possible.

Time must be allocated between Masses and any time the church is open to the public to conduct a cleaning before the next Mass or public use.

Once permission is given to resume public liturgies this will extend to daily Masses as well as funerals and baptisms. The Rite of Reconciliation may also take place with the required 6ft separation and wearing of masks by priests and penitents.

The Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick may resume under the following conditions;

- If this is performed in a hospital or healthcare facility, the guidelines for protective measures, including garments, prevail.
- If this is not performed in a hospital or healthcare facility: If available, latex gloves should be worn unless the patient or priest has an allergic sensitivity to latex. Additionally, if available, protective eye wear (a pair of glasses will suffice) should be worn. Eyeglasses or goggles or eye protectors can be re-used BUT MUST be cleaned immediately after each visit with Lysol/Clorox wipes or washed with soap and water.
- If the priest uses his gloved hand, the glove is to be burned or buried after the visit.
- If Holy Communion is given, it is to be distributed in the hand.
- Maintain social distance (six feet) with everyone in the room, except the patient.

Even with the resumption of public liturgies, those who are most vulnerable should not attend Mass in-person; rather they should continue to watch our televised Mass the “Chalice of Salvation” or their parish’s streaming or cablecast Masses.

I am extending the dispensation from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass even after we reopen out of an abundance of caution and concern for the most vulnerable who are most susceptible to contract this virus.

Finally all other parish social gatherings are still not allowed as are home visits by pastoral ministers.