

Diocese of Joliet
Coronavirus Update

May 29, 2020

To: Diocese of Joliet Priests, Deacons, Members of Re-opening Committees

From: Bishop Richard E. Pates

**STATE OF ILLINOIS ISSUES NEW GUIDANCE
FOR PLACES OF WORSHIP**

On May 28th, the State of Illinois issued guidelines for the reopening of churches for public use under strict restrictions.

For the Diocese of Joliet, this means:

1. Our churches can be open for weekend and daily Masses beginning on the weekend of June 6th and 7th and thereafter, **ONLY** if a certificate has been issued by the Diocese through the offices of Chris Nye or Alex Rechenmacher.
2. If certification has not been issued, the parishes will need to wait until such certification is received before opening. The churches do not need to open on June 6th and 7th but can open only when certified and prepared. This requirement is made in the interest of the common good and the commitment to provide for the elimination of the spread of COVID-19.

**Special Considerations of the State of Illinois
and the Diocese of Joliet Directives**

1. All, without exception, must wear face masks at all services.
2. Social distancing must be observed – 6ft between unrelated individuals (families, other parties that live together may be seated together). The guidelines issued by the state suggest the lesser of 25% church capacity or 100 persons, with opportunity for gradual expansion.
3. Parking lot or open-field Masses/services are allowed. A separate certification is required, once the parish's initial plan is approved.
4. The state strongly recommends continuation of live-streamed services and any virtual form of the Mass or service.
5. Some form of reservation system should be developed to avoid turning people away.

6. A volunteer team should be present and responsible for guiding the Mass participants.
7. No form of Mass guides are to be used. Missals and all books should be removed; collection baskets should be established at entrances/exits rather than collections being taken pew by pew.
8. Sanitizing should be provided after each service. Volunteer crews should be available for this purpose.
9. At one of the ongoing meetings of the priest deans of the diocese, it was determined that the Mass should retain its reverence and the Order of the Mass in its integrity should be preserved:
 - Introductory Rite
 - Liturgy of the Word
 - Preparation of the Gifts
 - Eucharistic Prayer
 - Communion Rite
 - Dismissal Rite

Although we are in extraordinary times, we cannot compromise the Sacred Character of the Mass nor its integrity and order. I am grateful to all for their commitment to this.

10. Below is the link to the May 28 State of Illinois' guidance regarding opening our churches. As you will note, it is quite lengthy. The guiding directives for the Diocese of Joliet will be the PHASE I/IA and PHASES II requirements for certification which were issued on May 18th.

<https://www.dph.illinois.gov/covid19/community-guidance/places-worship-guidance>

I am most grateful for your *scrupulous* attention to the full implementation of the directives which have been outlined. At issue is the HEALTH of our parishioners. They are to be reminded:

- That the dispensation from the Sunday obligation remains in force indefinitely.
- That if they are fearful or have any reluctance to return to Sunday observance at this time, they should not do so.
- That those most susceptible to contracting COVID-19 by virtue of age, medical condition or other vulnerability should not attend the in-person Mass.

I am ever so grateful to our priests for your generous and faithful shepherding during this time. Certainly our vocation has been challenged in a unique way.

Likewise, gratitude is owed to all the faithful for their cooperation with all of the directives from the Church and state at this time. It is an expression of love for the common good. "We're all in this together."

+ *Richard E Pates*

Most Reverend Richard E. Pates
Apostolic Administrator
Diocese of Joliet