

OFFICE of the ARCHBISHOP

ARCHDIOCESE OF LOUISVILLE

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April 30, 2021

Dear Father,

May God bless you during this holy Easter season! In his Easter Vigil homily, our Holy Father pondered the newly risen Jesus's instructions to his disciples, "go to Galilee." In Galilee, they will find a new beginning in spite of the tragedy of the crucifixion. In Galilee is a new path forward that acknowledges the past while seeking new opportunities. With confidence and trust in the Lord, we, too, "go to Galilee" to begin anew. Even as we reflect on a year tinged with fear and uncertainty, we look to the future with hope.

As you know well, the communal and in-person celebration of the Holy Eucharist is the "source and summit" of our faith. Thus, I would like to begin implementing a plan to move forward to a full in-person experience as soon as we can. At the same time, I am deeply concerned about safety and the common good. As we slowly and carefully move toward this reality, I am announcing some adaptations that you may begin to implement in the coming weeks.

The many steps along this journey require careful discernment. I thank the members of the COVID-19 Pastor Committee for their advice throughout this process, and I appreciate your feedback, which has been considered carefully in determining archdiocesan policies.

In light of increased capacity allowed by the Commonwealth of Kentucky and the growing number of people who have been vaccinated, I will now allow parishes to begin to relax the distance between family groups. However, there should always be at least three feet of distance between family groups. In suggesting this change, I again emphasize the importance of facial coverings and ask that you continue to require a mask or facial covering for everyone except small children and those with medical exemptions. All parishes should implement the many other safety measures that are in place in our churches.

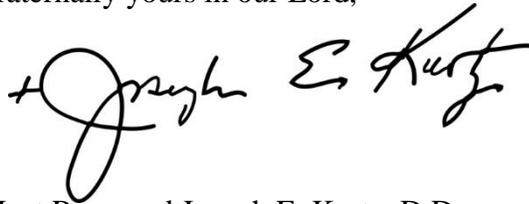
Because the 60% seating capacity remains insufficient to accommodate all the faithful, I will continue to dispense Catholics in the Archdiocese of Louisville from the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation until further notice. Nevertheless, greater capacity in our churches brings an opportunity for invitation, hospitality, and catechesis about the importance of communal worship. Resources for the latter will be shared as they become available.

Each parish may move forward with increasing capacity when the pastor, with proper consultation, judges that it is ready. It is prudent to plan according to individual parish circumstances and needs. We will continue to be in touch with public officials and are communicating these plans to them. I again welcome your comments or insights, and the COVID-19 Pastor Committee and the Office of Worship are available to discuss specific challenges.

Enclosed with this correspondence are specific revised guidelines for Masses and other liturgical celebrations.

Thank you for your leadership. You are in my prayers.

Fraternally yours in our Lord,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Joseph E. Kurtz". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and a distinct "E".

Most Reverend Joseph E. Kurtz, D.D.
Archbishop of Louisville

Attachment (1)