

## What to Expect When We Return to Public Masses



On April 27, 2020, Governor Polis released an Executive Order on "Safer at Home" which gives a tentative timeline for limited openings of limited categories of businesses. As of yet, there is no schedule on the reopening of the churches for Mass, or what regulations may have to be observed for the safety of all and continued preservation of the healthcare system. Once we are able to gather for Mass again, it is important that we all understand that it will involve safety precautions that we are not used to. We will all need to adapt. We don't know all the details, but we will all need to keep an open mind and charitable heart.

After consulting with our priests and parish representatives, we are beginning to understand some principles that will come into play when returning to public Mass.

1. **Social distancing will remain in place for some time to come.** The congregation will most likely need to adhere to the six feet separation restriction. Masks may be required to prevent the spread of germs. The use of the pews will have limitations and you may not be able to sit in your usual spot. If you have symptoms of illness, you should stay home.
2. **Attendance at any one Mass, whenever re-opened will be limited.** Restrictions will remain in place for large gatherings. Pastors are working with us on fair and equitable ways to reopen attendance. Your parish may contact you regarding which Mass times are open to you. Please ensure your parish has your contact information. Additionally, you may not be able to attend Mass every Sunday. In these circumstances, it is not a sin to miss Mass. Livestream Masses will continue. (see #4)
3. **Liturgical changes will remain in effect until further notice.** In order to prevent the spread of germs, we can expect to see similar protocols to those we began in March. For example, we may receive the Eucharist under one species and will likely have to refrain from use of holy water fonts or other points of contact.
4. **General dispensation from the Sunday obligation remains.** These extraordinary times merit the use of the Apostolic power from our Bishop. It is not a sin to miss Sunday Mass in this circumstance. You may be able to attend a weekday Mass instead or continue to watch livestream or prerecorded Mass. Anyone in a higher at-risk category and anyone showing signs of illness, has these alternate means of worship and should be responsible toward the preservation of God's gift or life.

Brothers and sisters, thank you for your cooperation through this time. Thank you for your prayers and your fervent hunger for the Eucharist and the return to public worship. As your shepherd, it gives me great joy to see this love for Jesus and the Church during a time that is otherwise distressing. We are praying for light at the end of the tunnel and a return to the Sacraments, but we must be prudent and safe about planning this transition. Nobody knows what lies ahead, as to the vaccination and cure of this virus. Keep in mind that our mission is being redesigned, but not changed. We are working now to discover, surface, and strengthen the intentional discipleship of the good people of this diocese. God will bring immense good from this trial and you are the good! Take heart! Jesus is with us!

Bishop Stephen Berg