DIOCESE OF JEFFERSON CITY
OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

INSTRUCTION

On Fulfilling the Decrees of 31 March 2020 and 17 April 2020

For Pastoral Activities in the Diocese of Jefferson City During the COVID-19 Pandemic

On 27 April 2020, Governor Mike Parson issued a state-wide order for the reopening of churches for public, in-person worship services effective 4 May 2020. Please note that city and county ordinances may remain in effect that could further restrict or limit church services in person. All pastors, administrators and parish life collaborators are obliged to follow the requirements of legitimate state authorities with regard to the pandemic.

After consultation with the Bishops of the Missouri Province and the Presbyteral Council of the Diocese, this Instruction is given to clarify, elaborate and determine the methods to be observed in fulfilling the current decrees on pastoral activity during the pandemic as we open up our churches to public Masses and other liturgies or devotions.

1. As of May 4, Pastors, Administrators and Parish Life Collaborators are to arrange for the baptism, reception into full communion, confirmation and first Holy Communion of those Elect and Candidates who were anticipating the Sacraments of Initiation this past Easter Vigil, unless the local legitimate authorities restrict the possibility of public worship services. Preference is to be given to celebrating the Sacraments of Initiation at a parish Sunday or Saturday Vigil Mass, following the requirements of social distancing and adapting them as appropriate.
2. The celebrations of First Communions that have been postponed because of the pandemic may be scheduled according to the judgment of the pastor, administrator or parish life collaborator.
3. Parish priests have the faculty to administer the Sacrament of Confirmation to their parishioners if the scheduled Confirmation Mass was canceled because of the pandemic (through 3 May 2020). For the scheduled Confirmation Masses on 4 May 2020 and after, the bishop's office will make contact with the pastors, administrators and parish life collaborators on the options for administering the sacrament.
4. The distribution of Holy Communion outside of Mass is left to the judgment of the pastor, administrator or parish life collaborator. If allowed, the requirements for the distribution of

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Communion during Mass are to be observed (such as, the use of masks and the sanitation of hands before and after Holy Communion is distributed.)

5. Adoration chapels may be opened if, at the discretion of the pastor, administrator, or parish life collaborator, the requirements of social distancing and sanitation of the facilities can be observed. Common prayer materials should not be made available but should be stored until the pandemic is over. Individuals may bring their own prayer materials with them into the chapel.
6. In-person parish meetings may take place at the discretion of the pastor, administrator or parish life collaborator, as long as either the six-foot distancing requirement or the use of masks and gloves or frequent handwashing can be observed. Tele- or video-conferencing are always an option.

For the celebration of public Masses, the following is to be observed:

Before Mass

1. All the faithful are dispensed from the obligation of the Easter Duty and the obligation to attend Mass on Sunday through 30 June 2020.
    a. Those who are symptomatic or who have been exposed to another with the virus within 14 days are not permitted to enter the church, in accordance with national, state and local health directives. All attendees are asked to check their temperature at home before coming to church.
    b. Those who are at risk because of an underlying health issue or who are over 60 are strongly encouraged, for their own health, to avoid the risk of attending public celebrations of the Mass.
    c. We highly encourage parishes to live stream Mass, even on a daily basis, so that those unable to attend in person may maintain a spiritual connection with their local church.
2. Appropriate cleaning of high use areas within the church is to be done before and after each service.
    a. The pews utilized by the assembly shall be wiped down with disinfectant.
    b. All hymnals and missalettes are to be removed from the pews and stored for the duration of the pandemic. No other materials may be left in the pews. The faithful are encouraged to bring their own missals or hymnals for use during the celebration of Mass.
    c. Restroom facilities and door handles, push plates, and knobs are to be sanitized after each service.
3. Holy water fonts are to remain empty until further notice.
4. Hand sanitizer is to be made available throughout the church, whenever possible.
5. The faithful are obliged to wear a mask (or other face covering) upon entering the church and during the celebration of Mass, except when seated in the pew and for the brief moment of receiving Holy Communion. Ushers and other volunteers are to wear masks and gloves (when gloves are not available, frequent handwashing will be necessary) throughout the celebration of Mass. Pastors are to ensure that these obligations are enforced without exception.
6. Clergy and other ministers are to maintain six-foot distancing and should not greet parishioners as they enter the church.

During Mass

1. Entry and exit doors are to be adequately designated and monitored. Entry doors are to be propped or held open before Mass, and exit doors are to be propped or held open at the end of Mass to prevent people from touching the door handles, knobs or push plates.
2. Staff, ushers or other volunteers should assist with directing people to pews specifically marked. Attendance may be limited to assure compliance with social distancing requirements.
3. Families are to maintain six-foot distancing between their family and other families or individuals throughout the celebration of Mass.
    a. Seating is to be arranged such that six feet of distance can be maintained between members of one household and members of another.
    b. One or two pews are to be left vacant in between congregants such that six feet of distance can be maintained in all directions.
    c. Music ministers are to maintain six-foot social distancing.
4. Offertory processions are suspended as well as the sign of peace. Collection baskets (or any other materials) shall not be passed from one family to another, nor shall ushers take up the collection from the congregation. Stationary baskets are to be used for donations from the assembly and are to be monitored by the ushers until the donations are collected and handled according to the proper protocols in place for handling the collection.
5. All concelebrating priests and deacons are to receive Holy Communion by intinction utilizing a separate chalice from the main celebrant and with the last clergy communicant consuming all that remains in the Chalice.
6. For the distribution of communion, ushers or other volunteers who are masked and gloved will ensure six-foot distancing in the communion line. Floor markings shall be placed six feet apart in the aisles in which the congregation approaches the sanctuary for communion to facilitate proper social distancing.
7. Communion ministers must be masked, sanitize their hands immediately before and after distributing Communion, and when at all possible, to utilize a disinfectant wipe or purificator dipped in a sanitizing solution (at least 60% ethanol or 70% isopropyl alcohol) to sanitize their fingers when incidental contact is made with the communicant.
8. Distribution of Holy Communion from the chalice is prohibited to the assembly. For those who are gluten intolerant, special arrangements are to be made with the pastor.
9. For the distribution of Holy Communion, a single-file for each Communion minister is necessary to maintain social distancing. Multiple Communion ministers may be used as long as one-way traffic patterns are observed.
10. During this time, Holy Communion will only be distributed in the hand in keeping with the advice of state health officials and thereby to avoid the Communion minister's fingers coming into contact with saliva.
11. When approaching the Communion minister, the communicant is to pull their mask below their chin and present one hand resting on the palm of the other. After responding "Amen," the communicant reverently places the Eucharist in his or her mouth and immediately replaces their mask.

After Mass

1. Family units should depart the church in an organized manner wearing masks and observing six feet of distance between other households. Ushers or clergy may need to direct this process.
2. Ushers are not to hand out bulletins or other materials.
3. Clergy and other ministers are not to greet parishioners as they exit the church.
4. There are to be no receptions or social gatherings (e.g., coffee and doughnuts) following Mass.
5. Pews and other high traffic areas of the church are to be wiped down before the next service, with the removal of trash and other items from the pews.

Given this 28th day of April 2020 at the Chancery of the Diocese of Jefferson City.

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Most Rev. W. Shawn McKnight, S.T.D.

Bishop of Jefferson City

Mrs. Constance Schepers

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Chancellor