



DIocese OF LITTLE ROCK

2500 North Tyler Street • P.O. Box 7565 • Little Rock, Arkansas 72217 • (501) 664-0340 Fax (501) 664-6304

May 4, 2020

To the people of the Diocese of Little Rock

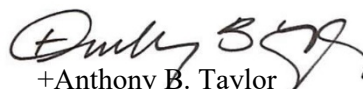
Today Governor Hutchinson issued guidance regarding the resumption of public worship on a limited basis in Arkansas. While this is welcome news, the Mass brings with it special challenges regarding the distribution of the Eucharist, which requires direct contact with the recipients. In order to benefit from this partial reopening of public worship, I authorize the resumption of the public celebration of the Mass starting the weekend of May 16-17, or earlier if your parish is ready.

- Parishes must post signage reminding people to stay home if they do not feel well or have been exposed to someone who tested positive for COVID-19.
- Most people will still not be able to be able to attend Mass under the following conditions, so my dispensation of everyone from the Sunday Mass obligation remains in effect.
- The number of people admitted to Mass will be limited to 25% of the maximum occupancy in order to maintain the required 6' physical distancing between family groups or individuals.
- All participants, including children over 10 years of age, must wear masks or other covering of their mouth and nose. All must use hand sanitizer upon arrival at the Church.
- The priest will maintain 12' physical distance from the congregation—as stipulated by Governor Hutchinson—unless he is distributing Communion. He does not wear a mask except when distributing Communion. In parishes where the sacristy is near the sanctuary, the priest enters directly into the sanctuary without an entrance or recessional procession. He does not greet people before or after Mass.
- No priest, deacon or Communion Minister in a risk group will distribute Communion unless there is no alternative. The risk groups that disqualify one from distributing Communion are: age (over 65) and chronic or immune suppressed conditions at any age, such as diabetes, cancer, cancer survivor, COPD, MS, rheumatoid arthritis, chronic bronchitis, asthma, obesity and heart disease.

I have prepared a more extensive document listing other requirements with which parishes must comply in order to proceed, plus options pastors might consider in applying these directives to the specific realities of his parish, for instance regarding how to restrict attendance to just 25% of the building capacity, which might include having more, shorter Masses, celebrating Sunday Mass every day of the week and the transmission of the Mass via CCTV to other buildings with reception of Communion.

Please pray that this initial loosening of restrictions may be successful and that conditions will soon allow us to return to ever greater participation in the sacramental life of the Church.

Sincerely in Christ,


+Anthony B. Taylor
Bishop of Little Rock