



May 27, 2020

**Resuming Public Masses in the Diocese of Reno
in the Time of the COVID 19 Pandemic**

Starting on the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity, June 7, 2020, parishes in the Diocese of Reno may resume public Masses provided they are ready to proceed with the necessary safety provisions. Under the State of Nevada's Phase Two, houses of worship are limited to gatherings of no more than 50 people.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches that "Life and physical health are precious gifts entrusted to us by God. We must take reasonable care of them, taking into consideration the needs of others and the common good" (CCC 2288). This moral teaching has guided and will continue to guide our safety protocols during the novel Coronavirus pandemic, especially since there is currently no vaccine or proven treatment. Providing a safe environment is paramount as we gather together to worship God, the author of life and source of all goodness.

The protocols for safety follow guidelines and recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control, the State of Nevada, the resources provided by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Catholic liturgical and medical experts, and the Vatican's Congregation for Divine Worship and the Sacraments.

Respect Life

We are called to respect life from the moment of conception to natural death. It is nothing less than a moral obligation for each of us to be considerate of one another's health and safety when we come to church. All are asked to follow the protocols for safety in the spirit of justice and charity: in justice, for we owe it to each other as brothers and sisters to care about one another's life; in charity, for we follow the Golden Rule which Jesus preached in his Sermon on the Mount, "Do unto others whatever you would have them do to you. This is the law and the prophets" (Matthew 7:12).

Some may object or disagree with a given protocol, but all are asked to abide with them. The peace that marks the sanctuary for worship is neither the time nor the place for arguments or confrontation. For the sake of all, some may be called to put aside personal opinion or sacrifice convenience. Let us all take to heart St. Paul's admonition: "Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience...And let the peace of Christ control your hearts, the peace unto which you were also called in one body" (Col. 3:12; 15).

Vulnerable Persons

While anyone of any age can come down with COVID 19, there are those of us who have a higher risk of severe illness if infected. The Centers for Disease Control lists as vulnerable persons people 65 years and older and people of any age with underlying health issues: asthma, chronic lung disease, chronic kidney disease being treated with dialysis, diabetes, compromised immunity, liver

disease, severe heart conditions, and severe obesity. The federal guidelines “Opening Up America Again” advise vulnerable individuals to stay at home during the initial phases of reopening. A large number of parishioners fall in this category. Some who are 65 years and older may feel healthy enough to shop for groceries or even resume work. We ask them to consult with their health care providers and assess the level of risk if they should choose to come to church. We care about people defined as “vulnerable” but also want to minimize the health risks for them. We also expect individuals to take responsibility for their health.

Some priests, deacons, Eucharistic ministers, and greeters are in the category of vulnerable persons. They are all asked to consult with their health care providers if they are to assume liturgical ministry and under what conditions this would be safe for them. There will be necessary adjustments that all are asked to respect.

Parishes should consider having special liturgies only for vulnerable people of limited duration and with an overabundance of social distancing.

Dispensation from the Obligation of Sunday Mass

Since the beginning of the pandemic, the bishop has granted a dispensation from the obligation of Sunday Mass in the Diocese of Reno to anyone who should not attend Mass for health reasons or who do not feel safe in coming to church. This dispensation continues until further notice.

Parishes are encouraged to continue livestreaming Masses for those who are not able to attend in person.

What Will Be Prepared for You When You Come to Church

The church will be cleaned and surface areas and door knobs/handles will be sanitized. There will be hand sanitizing dispensers as you enter and seating will be arranged for social distancing. Social distancing is defined as a minimum of 6 ft. of physical separation front and back and sides.

What We Ask You to Do When You Come

1. If you are feeling sick, have a fever, are coughing or sneezing, please stay at home.
2. Please exercise personal hygiene and use the available hand sanitizer.
3. Please, please wear a facial mask. Do it for your neighbor. Wear a mask out of respect for the sanctity of each other’s God-given life. Let it be your offering as you partake of the fruits of the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. Justice done for one’s neighbor is a pleasing offering to God as the prophets proclaimed. Children two years and younger should not wear a mask.
4. Please leave your name and contact information. Some parishes will ask you to call or email your church your intention to attend a certain Mass or you can bring in this information and drop it in a box or other receptacle at the church’s entrance. Contact tracing is a vital part of containing the spread of Covid 19. Churches that have this information make it readily available for health authorities to do the necessary contact tracing. In churches that do not have this information, news media will have to inform the public and parishes will need to figure out who attended a Mass where there has been exposure to the Coronavirus.
5. Observe social distancing. Seating in the church will be marked for this purpose. Families and couples can sit together but others apart.

6. There will be no handshakes, holding hands, hugs or other forms of physical contact unless people are members of the same household. For the kiss of peace, please greet each other in an appropriate non-contact way.

7. For communion, please follow directions for social distancing. To safeguard against any potential transmission of the virus, communion will only be given in the hand. Communion will not be administered on the tongue because of the health risk involved. One may claim a right to receive communion on the tongue, but this is not an absolute right; the right to life supersedes it. The right to life is a natural right; the right to receive on the tongue is a right given by the church. An essential disposition for reception of communion is reverence and the practice of communion in the hand extends back to the earliest days of the Church and understood as no less reverent. The disposition of one's mind and heart determines reverence in reception.