

Most Rev. Thomas A. Daly **Diocesan Principles for Opening**

The State of Washington has determined that most counties in the Diocese of Spokane are in Phase II of opening which allows for services such as hair salons, pet grooming, and restaurants at 50% capacity. The bishops of Washington have received no guidance from the governor's office concerning religious services in Phase II. After consultation with the Spokane Regional Health District, I have decided to allow public Masses under strict safety protocols for those counties of the diocese in Phase II. Phase I counties must follow state guidelines pending consultation with local health authorities.

Beginning on Saturday evening, May 30th, the Vigil of Pentecost, public Masses are allowed but not required in Phase II counties. Public Masses are only allowed while following these principles:

Obligation

- The dispensation from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass remains in place until further notice. This means that although Sunday Mass is available once again, the dispensation remains for all Catholics throughout the diocese. If you do not attend Sunday Mass, it is not a sin.
- Vulnerable, at risk, or otherwise concerned persons must remain at home.
- Anyone who has even the slightest symptoms or feelings of sickness must remain at home.

Occupancy

- Parishes are permitted to offer Mass up to 25% of possible building occupancy.
- A distance of no less than 6 feet must be maintained between households.
- The names and contact information of those attending Mass must be kept on file in the parish office for 30 days.
- Please do not congregate before or after Mass.

Sanitation

Maintaining proper distance between parishioners and containing the respiratory droplets from people is essential.

- Parishioners are strongly encouraged to wear face masks.
- Provision for hand sanitizer is mandated.
- Doors to the church should be propped open to increase natural air flow.
- Employ sanitation methods following gatherings.
- Pew missals, envelopes, song books, etc. should be removed.
- Holy water fonts are to remain empty.
- The Sign of Peace is to be omitted.

- Do not pass the collection basket from parishioner to parishioner.
- There is to be no procession/presentation of gifts by the faithful.
- Congregational singing is prohibited.

Abbreviated Time for Gatherings

Limiting the amount of time which people are gathered is recommended by health care experts.

- Homilies should be brief – 3 minutes or less.
- Take advantage of optional shortened bible readings and use of Eucharistic Prayer II.
- Liturgical processions inside church buildings are prohibited. If possible, simply enter and exit from the sacristy.

Holy Communion

- Parishioners are encouraged to receive Holy Communion on a flattened hand.
- Households approaching for Holy Communion should be separated from other households following the six-foot separation guideline.
- If extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion are necessary, they should be kept to a bare minimum number.
- Wearing gloves and using tongs are not permitted.

As your bishop I am concerned for the spiritual and physically health of all the faithful. If you have any reservations about attending Mass, I ask you to stay home.