



## **DIOCESE OF PATERSON**

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**Office of  
THE BISHOP**

May 22, 2020

My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

President Trump stated earlier today that houses of worship should be considered essential services and be open for worship. We must act with careful consideration for health and public safety.

We have already sent out guidelines mandated for the reopening of our churches. Now the time has come.

I remind you: follow social distancing by maintaining six feet between every person in church; have hand sanitizers available for your people; insist on the wearing of face masks for those older than 2; figure out a way to have your church properly cleaned and sanitized after it has been used. I know that you will do your very best to protect your people's health and safety.

The recent emails from the diocese on re-opening our churches will help you do this. These remain in effect. Reopen when you are ready to serve your parishioners with respect for their health and safety. For most parishes, this would mean opening no earlier than May 30. If you do not feel ready to reopen next weekend, then delay your opening for a week or two. Let your parishioners know when they can expect to worship in your church.

At the same time, please remind your people that any person with symptoms of a fever or cough should remain at home. A person who has symptoms places everyone else in jeopardy.

I want to reiterate some other elements of our guidelines: Adjust the times of your Masses, if necessary, to allow enough time to clean your church after Mass. The dispensation from the obligation of Mass attendance continues for those unable to get to Church.

We have to take care of each other. I am especially concerned about our older priests being vigilant about their own health. If you cannot obtain a priest for help at Mass, please seek the assistance from the office of Monsignor Mahoney or Monsignor Hart.

God bless you for all you are doing to help others during this pandemic. We are not finished dealing with this scourge. Hopefully, opening up our churches will be a spiritual support to our people.

I know that you join with me in prayer for all those who have died from Covid-19. May God have mercy on their souls.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Arthur J. Serratelli, S.T.D., S.S.L., D.D.  
Apostolic Administrator