



In response to Governor Baker's announcements today regarding re-opening Houses of Worship, Bishop McManus has issued the following:

May 18, 2020

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Nine weeks ago, in response to an unprecedented pandemic and in order to slow the spread of COVID-19, I suspended all public celebrations of the Sacred Liturgy in the Diocese of Worcester. Since that time we have prayed for an end to the pandemic, cared for the sick, buried the dead, consoled the mourning and proclaimed the Gospel through innovative means.

By the grace of God, we have finally reached the point at which the spread of the virus has slowed sufficiently as to allow for us to return to Church and to the celebration of those sacred mysteries which are the source and summit of our lives.

Effective May 23, 2020 I am lifting my suspension of public celebrations of the Liturgy in the Diocese of Worcester. In the light of the continuing and specific danger presented by this virus to older people and those with certain health conditions, the obligation to take part in the Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation continues to be lifted.

I caution all Priests to carefully observe the restrictions which continue to be imposed by government authorities in the interest of public health. This joy we feel during the first phase of resumption of our ecclesial life must be balanced by a concern for the common good, as we continue to do everything possible to further stem the spread of this dread disease.

To that end I direct that the liturgical adaptations contained in the May 18, 2020 issue of *Orantes*, our diocesan liturgical newsletter, be implemented in each of the parishes and Catholic institutions of the Diocese of Worcester. In the coming days the Office for Divine Worship will coordinate information sessions for pastors and parish administrators to assure that appropriate precautions are followed. Our Communications Ministry will use all available means to let the faithful know what will be expected of them in order to comply with the Commonwealth's regulations for public safety.

If, for any reason, a parish cannot comply with the safety standards being issued by the Office for Divine Worship this week, public celebrations of the Mass and sacraments cannot resume at the parish until it resolves the issues.

Perhaps the most unforgettable image of these past weeks was of our Holy Father, standing alone before the Cross in the vastness of Saint Peter's square. At that moment, he embodied the isolation we have all felt, but at the same time he reminded us that from that Cross, the Lord calls us "to rediscover the life that awaits us, to look towards those who look to us, to strengthen, recognize and foster the grace that lives within us. Let us not quench the wavering flame that never falters, and let us allow hope to be rekindled."

With every prayerful best wish, I remain,

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Robert J. McManus, S.T.D.
Bishop of Worcester