

## **TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Phase One: "Reopening of Churches for Private Prayer beginning: May 13, 2020"**

#### **Common Directives to be Observed by All Parishes**

- Dispensation from Sunday/Holy Day obligation remains in force until further notice.
- Pastors determine whether or not and when they can open their churches safely.
- No public Masses or other group liturgical/devotional celebrations until further notice.
- Sacramental celebrations in church (baptisms, confirmations, ordinary schedule of confessions, weddings) continue to be postponed until further notice.
- Live-streaming of Masses without congregations to continue.
- Churches will be closed for private prayer and empty during live-streamed Masses and will be reopened for private prayer after Mass.
- Faithful from at risk groups as identified by CDC/NJ DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH should remain at home.
- Regular sanitization of churches after use.
- Limited days open for private prayer: at least Monday through Friday.
- Hours for private prayer in open church to be determined by pastor.
- Limited number of visitors at one time (no more than 10) according to NJ state guidelines and social distancing (minimum of 6 feet between visitors) to be observed.
- Areas/pews for seating to be reserved to facilitate cleaning afterward.
- Wearing of masks required for all those making visits

#### **Directives Determined by Individual Pastors**

- Pastors determine whether or not and when they can open their churches safely.
- Limit days/times open for private prayer: at least Monday through Friday.
- Coordinate "staggered hours" for open churches with pastors/parishes of deanery.
- Designate a single entrance to control number of visitors; no gathering at entrance, steps or parking lots.
- Close public restroom facilities as a preventive health measure and post closure on restroom doors; consider posting this on website.
- Remove all worship aides, pamphlets, books and paper from church pews; provide no handouts.
- Utilize a volunteer cleaning crew if possible.
- Encourage visitors to bring their own disinfectant wipes; provide trash receptacles at church entrance/exit.
- Begin online searching for coronavirus deep cleaning services (for example, resources on CDC website).
- Parishes with multiple church sites should only open one site, preferably the larger one where social distancing is easier.
- Post ALL directives in online parish bulletins, parish websites, social media and at church entrance.
- If church is open on weekends, close one hour before live-streamed Mass time.

Approved by Most Reverend David M. O'Connell, C.M., J.C.D.  
Bishop of Trenton  
May 8, 2020