



DIOCESE OF ST. PETERSBURG

Office of the Bishop

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Sunday is the Lord's Day, but for over two months, we have been observing this holy day at home to be safe and to protect human life, especially the most vulnerable among us.

After prayer and consultation with government and public health officials and our priests, **I have decided to grant permission to pastors throughout the Diocese of St. Petersburg, at their discretion, to resume the public celebration of Sunday Masses as early as the weekend of May 30-31, 2020.**

We are called to be good stewards of our health and to take practical steps to avoid spreading illness. Therefore, restrictions will be in place since we are still in the midst of a pandemic. For now, we will need to limit the number of people at church for social distancing and to continue the practice of frequent sanitizing.

However, since the risk of coming into contact with coronavirus remains, individuals and families should take personal responsibility to protect themselves.

Please know that all Catholics remain dispensed from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass until further notice. Therefore, if you are at greater risk due to age, illness, or other health conditions, please do not come to Mass. For those who are able to attend Mass, I urge you to follow CDC guidelines and parish procedures. Also, let us show charity, patience and kindness as processes and plans are developed.

Pastors and parish staff may face challenges because of the health and/or age of priests, deacons, staff members and volunteers. This means that every parish may do things a little differently and some parishes might require additional time to safely resume Sunday Masses with the public.

May 30th and 31st will indeed be days to rejoice! Not only will public Masses on Sunday resume, but we also celebrate Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit descended upon the apostles and graced them with gifts to courageously live the Gospel.

This same Spirit lives in us! We have been given the gifts of fortitude, wisdom and understanding. Let us rely on the Spirit for guidance and knowledge.

Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in us the fire of your love.

May God bless and protect you and your loved ones!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Gregory Parkes
Bishop of St. Petersburg