

# *Together in Faith*

*Mother of God and our Mother,  
pray for us to God, the Father of mercies  
that this great suffering may end  
and that hope and peace may dawn anew. Amen.*

*~Pope Francis*



PASTORAL DIRECTIVES FOR THE REOPENING OF CHURCHES  
AND THE RESUMPTION OF PUBLIC MASSES  
IN THE DIOCESE OF JACKSON  
— MAY 30-31, 2020



**MOST REVEREND JOSEPH R. KOPACZ, D.D., PH.D.**  
CATHOLIC DIOCESE *of* JACKSON

May 15, 2020

Dear Friends in Christ,

At this time, I bring good news to the faithful of the Diocese of Jackson that the resumption of the public celebration of Mass will be on the feast of Pentecost, Saturday and Sunday, May 30 – 31. I thank the leadership throughout our diocese over these past two months who have informed every decision along the way through prayer, conversations and patient listening. Through it all the common good of our parish and school communities and the general population throughout our state was the governing principle.

I pray that the physical separation from the Eucharist since March has fostered a hunger to deepen our relationship with Jesus Christ, the Word and Bread of Life in every way, and especially for the reception of Holy Communion in our beloved churches. This season of distancing on many levels makes it crystal clear that our seven sacraments are physical, up close, and personal as the Lord intends. His incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection nurture and inspire our faith, and our hunger to say Amen at the altar is an assent to his Real Presence in the Eucharist, and a commitment to live each day in his name because Christ has no body now but ours.

Realistically, we know that we will not be returning to normalcy on Pentecost Sunday. This pandemic will not be going away anytime soon. Based on the capacity of our churches we will be welcoming back smaller congregations under rigorous protocols that will be consistently applied in all our parishes. We are committed to upholding safety and reverence. Just like the airlines that do not deviate one iota on each flight from the stated mandatory safety measures before taking off, we too want to strive for excellence with regard to safety protocols so that we can worship with peace of mind and a heart open to the sacred heart of the Lord. What follows are very specific directives and requirements for the public celebration of Masses in our churches.

Because the dispensation from the Sunday obligation is still in effect many churches will continue to live-stream at least one weekend Mass, and spiritual communion will be encouraged for those who are vulnerable due to age and/or existing health conditions.

Likewise, the dispensation will allow many more people in our parish communities to attend Mass on weekdays lessening the logistical challenges on the weekend.

May our God of encouragement and endurance bless you and your families and may the peace of Christ govern your hearts and minds.

Asking the intercession of our Blessed Mother and all the Saints, I remain,

Sincerely yours in Christ.

+ *Joseph R. Kopacz*

Bishop of Jackson

**CURRENT LITURGICAL DIRECTIVES AND ALLOWANCES**  
*as of May 18, 2020*

The following directives are currently in place as of May 18, 2020:

- The faithful are dispensed from the Sunday Obligation until further notice.
- Livestreamed Masses ONLY may be celebrated with No Congregation present
- No public distribution of Holy Communion – such as drive-thru distribution in the parking lot.
- Sacraments and Rites that are allowed:
  - Reconciliation – masks and social distancing of six ft required
  - Baptism – must be Outside of Mass with 10 or less people present
  - Matrimony – must be Outside of Mass with 10 or less people present
  - Funerals – Graveside only with 10 or less people present
  - RCIA Elect and Candidates may be received into the Church in gatherings of 10 or less.
  - Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament may occur in the church with 10 or less present at one time. Masks and social distancing are required. Adoration may also be held in the parking lot if people remain in their cars and can maintain proper social distancing.

## General Directives

- **Bishop Kopacz will continue to dispense all the faithful from the Sunday Obligation to participate in Mass until further notice.**
- The public celebration of Mass will begin on the Solemnity of the Feast of Pentecost at 4 pm on Saturday, May 30.
- Home Masses: At this time, Masses may not be celebrated in private homes or properties of parishioners. This places everyone at risk.
- The sacraments and rites currently in place are continued with proper social distancing. (See above)
- First Holy Communion and Confirmation celebrations may begin August 1, 2020.
  - Bishop Kopacz has delegated individual pastors to confer the Sacrament of Confirmation for the remainder of 2020.
  - If a candidate will be moving away prior to August 1, pastors may confer the sacrament individually for this family in the church.
- Social distancing will be kept in accord with the state and local health recommendations and local ordinances.
- **Each parish and mission should have a plan in place by May 25**, for re-opening that includes seating map, training of ushers and hospitality ministers in the plan, a method for parishioners to sign up for Mass, and a communique sent to parishioners explaining the plan.
- Parish Mass schedules may be expanded to accommodate the faithful but taking great care not to spiritually bankrupt clergy with too many celebrations – a maximum of two vigils on Saturday evening and four masses on Sunday.
- Choir and Ensemble singing and practices are suspended until further notice.
- Livestreaming of Mass may continue.
- Livestreaming to overflow crowds in parish centers or gyms on parish campuses though not ideal for participation will be allowed during this time.
- These directives above and below may not encompass every minute detail. The overriding maxim is: use common sense. According to health officials, this virus will linger in our communities for longer than we can project. **Stay safe and be vigilant!**

# Preparation of Church and Faithful

## Safety and Hygiene in Worship Spaces

- When in doubt, err on the side of caution. Each parish and mission should have a plan for spacing of parishioners. Ushers and hospitality ministers should be trained in the seating plan prior to May 30.
- Baptismal fonts and holy water fonts should remain empty.
- Water for baptism is to be changed and blessed before each baptism. As always, blessed water should be properly disposed of in the ground.
- Vessels should continue to be washed after each Mass in hot soapy water.
- All liturgical vestments, including server vesture, are to be regularly cleaned. The number of servers should be minimal.
  - If you require the assistance of altar server( s ), in addition to proper distancing, use of mask, and hand washing/sanitizing, their use of shared special attire should be temporarily suspended, unless their albs, cassocks, surplices, etc. will be washed after each use. If server vesture cannot be cleaned after each use then consider allowing servers to wear appropriate clothing of their own, i.e. – khaki pants and white shirt.
- High use areas within the church should be wiped down with disinfectant before and after each liturgy. This will include pews, chairs, and ambos.
  - **Cry rooms should be closed** and unavailable during the celebration of Mass.
- Hand rails, Door handles, push plates, and knobs should be wiped down after each liturgy. Doors might be propped open to lessen contact.
- Restroom facilities should be sanitized after each liturgy and regularly.
- The liturgical environment should be considered, too. Reflect the liturgical season but keep all decorations at a minimum (less surfaces to clean or attract germs).
- **All hymnals and missalettes (and other items) should be removed** from the pews and stored for the duration of the pandemic. At each Mass, disposable worship aids may be distributed, then discarded. As always, appropriate copyright licenses are to be respected.
- Supplies of disinfectant or hand sanitizers may be limited. Plan ahead.
- As one emergency room doctor put it, “If you can’t take this seriously, stay closed.”

## **Safety and Hygiene: The Duty of Every Individual**

- **Those who are sick or symptomatic should stay home! This includes clergy!**
- Vulnerable individuals, those 65 and older or with underlying health conditions, should continue to shelter in place. Families with vulnerable individuals are encouraged to continue to take special precautions.
- We would like for parents to consider the vulnerability of infants, toddlers and small children during this time, considering not bringing them to Mass or to perhaps bring them to a Mass during the week that is less attended rather than one of the busier weekend Masses.
- Wash hands at home and use hand sanitizer upon entering the church.
- **Face masks** are mandated for all assembly members over the age of two.
- Pastors must use face masks in proximity to parishioners, especially during the distribution of communion.
- Pastors and LEMs should make every effort to clearly communicate good hygienic practices and liturgical alterations to their parishioners prior to May 30, in light of continuing public health concerns.

## LITURGICAL DIRECTIVES

### PREPARATIONS BEFORE MASS

- Bread and wine should continue to be kept from public areas (brought only from the credence table).
- Priests, deacons, and all liturgical ministers should model good hygienic practices before, during, and after Mass. Presiders, deacons, and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion should use hand sanitizer before Mass, before and after the Communion Procession, and after Mass.
- **Ushers should seat parishioners as they arrive.** Families that live under the same roof may sit together; beyond that all should be seated six feet apart to maintain social distancing at all times. Ushers should direct parishioners at the end of Mass too.
- The Gospel Book should be placed on the altar prior to Mass and not carried in procession.

### THE INTRODUCTORY RITES

- Processions through the assembly at the beginning and end of Mass should be re-examined. A simple entrance from the sacristy or near the sanctuary is recommended.
- Be mindful of the options available for the Penitential Act.
- The Gloria is sung or recited at all Solemnities and Major Feasts
- Consider placing a stand near the presider's chair to hold the Roman Missal. This eliminates the need for the server to stand near the presider when he prays the Collect and Post Communion Prayer and Blessing.

### THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

- The *Introduction to the Lectionary for Mass* calls for two distinct readers to proclaim the Sunday readings (no. 52). During this time, the use of one lector will be permitted.
- Minimize page turns with carefully arranged ribbons or tabs.
- As always, be sure to include the needs of the whole world when composing the Universal Prayers (Prayer of the Faithful). Include the names of parishioners who have died and also remember those victims who have died from the virus locally and worldwide.



## THE LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST & COMMUNION RITE

- The gifts of bread and wine should be brought to the altar from the credence table in the sanctuary. There is no offertory procession involving congregation members.
- For the offertory, baskets will not be passed in the pews. An offertory station can be used, run by the ushers. Baskets should be sanitized before and after Mass.
- Priests are temporarily dispensed from the rubric "He bows slightly" before each consecration.
- Exchanging the sign of peace should not involve physical contact and could include a bow, a wave, or a verbal greeting of peace.
- **Distribution of the Precious Blood continues to be suspended.**
- **Distribution of Holy Communion will be in the hand. Distribution on the tongue is suspended.** Medical personnel have emphasized that saliva is one of the worst fluids for transmission.
- Preferably, younger priests and/or younger Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion in good health should distribute communion.
- The use of gloves to distribute Holy Communion is no more effective than distributing with the bare hand. Indeed, gloves would have to be changed for each communicant. Use of tongs or other instruments would, likewise, come into contact with each communicant's hands.
- The Communion Rite is an essential and unmovable element of the Order of Mass (*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, nos. 22.3, 50, 55, 56). It is not to be celebrated after Mass.
- Masses may not be celebrated in private homes or properties of parishioners.

## Communion in the Hand

To those who struggle with this re-emphasize that this is a temporary directive meant to protect the health of all. The practice of receiving Holy Communion in the hand dates to the early centuries of our Church.

"In approaching therefore, come not with your wrists extended, or your fingers spread; but make your left hand a throne for the right, as for that which is to receive a King. And having hollowed your palm, receive the Body of Christ, saying over it, Amen. So then after having carefully hallowed your eyes by the touch of the Holy Body, partake of it; giving heed lest you lose any portion thereof; for whatever you lose, is evidently a loss to you as it were from one of your own members. For tell me, if any one gave you grains of gold, would you not hold them with all carefulness, being on your guard against losing any of them, and suffering loss? Will you not then much more carefully keep watch, that not a crumb fall from you of what is more precious than gold and precious stones?"

*Cyril of Jerusalem – Fifth  
Mystagogical Catechesis #21*

## CONCLUDING RITE

- Consider placing a stand near the presider's chair to hold the Roman Missal. This eliminates the need for the server to stand near the presider when he prays the Collect and Post Communion Prayer and Blessing.
- The Presider may make full use of the options for blessings, taking into account the liturgical season and the needs of the faithful.
- **Ushers should direct people in leaving the pews.**

## MUSIC MINISTRY

- **Choir and Ensemble singing and practices are suspended until further notice.** Choirs and ensembles are a high aerosol generating activity that could spread COVID-19 or other viruses.
- Music ministry must be limited in terms of numbers of participants – one cantor and one instrumentalist to lead the assembly.
- **Remove hymnals and missalettes** from pews and store them. Use a simple, disposable worship aid for every Mass.
- Always respect copyrights for printed or mechanical reproduction. Contact publishers for annual licenses.
- **Consider the increased use of psalmody and their antiphons**, which are certainly an essential part of our rich Tradition – especially the Entrance Antiphon (introit) and Communion antiphon.
- In light of this, you might need to reconsider repertoire. Choose hymns texts and tunes which people easily know.
- Consider the use of music with repetitive refrains.
- Consider the need for longer hymns at the Communion Rite. Perhaps plan “bridges” between multiple hymns. Communicants will be spaced apart in procession.
- Assume that everyone will be singing through masks. Some scientists contend that saliva may spread as far as 26 feet.
- Clean any keyboards, cantor stands, music binders and instruments between Masses.