



CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF  
**PITTSBURGH**  
NEWS

111 Boulevard of the Allies  
Pittsburgh, PA 15222

E-mail: [communications@diopitt.org](mailto:communications@diopitt.org)  
[www.diopitt.org](http://www.diopitt.org)

**Contact:** **Ellen Mady**  
**(o) 412-456-3129**  
**(c) 412-961-4888**

---

**For Release: May 14, 2020**

**DIOCESE OF PITTSBURGH ANNOUNCES GRADUAL REOPENING OF CHURCHES STARTING MAY 15**

In a conference call with priests and deacons this afternoon, Bishop David Zubik shared more details regarding the strategic plan for the gradual reopening of Churches in the diocese, including additions to current directives that will be in effect starting tomorrow, May 15, as well as more clarity regarding the timeline for opening for celebrations of the Holy Mass.

"We are eager to return to the comfort of our Churches and join together in prayer as a source of spiritual strength to support us through the suffering and anxiety caused by the COVID-19 pandemic," Bishop Zubik said. "We are working with health agencies and in coordination with other religious leaders to proceed in a way that tends to spiritual health, while protecting the physical health of our community."

Tomorrow, Allegheny, Butler, Greene, and Washington counties join Lawrence county in moving to the state's "yellow" level of reopening. Beaver county remains in "red" until further notice, with the strictest stay-at-home orders still in place. The Commonwealth will continually evaluate the reopening process and make necessary adjustments county-by-county. This means, our parishes throughout the diocese may be in different phases of reopening at any given time.

Starting tomorrow, May 15, 2020, the first phase of the diocesan reopening plan for the counties in the state's "yellow" level of reopening includes the following:

- Limited funeral Masses and weddings continue, with cleaning/sanitizing guidelines in place, expanding to groups of no more than 25 people.
- Churches will be permitted to open for private prayer with safety guidelines in place including seating in designated areas only, the use of masks, hand sanitizers, and social distancing.
- Churches will be permitted to open for Confessions – Confessionals do not meet public health safety requirements, and as such, Confessions will be heard at posted times and in a manner that preserves the sanctity of the Sacrament. Penitents must practice social distancing and all other safety guidelines.
- Baptisms can be scheduled but with the restriction of one family baptism per each ceremony and no more than 25 people present. Great care must be given to social distancing, wearing masks, and sanitization precautions.
- Livestream Masses and prayer services will continue.

A diocesan COVID-19 Task Force team has developed a comprehensive reference guide, called "Moving Forward Together." This document, which will be released tomorrow (May 15), details health and safety guidelines that will need to be met as Churches reopen for in-person liturgical celebrations. The guidelines will be reviewed by pastors and priests, and posted for the faith community, so they know

their part in creating safe prayer environments.

Diocesan leadership will assist and support Pastors as they make decisions on reopening based on government guidelines specific to their county, as well as their own assessment of the ability to meet all necessary health and safety requirements including wearing masks and honoring social distancing requirements.

Moving forward from this phase, the diocese will look to return to the public celebration of the Holy Mass, starting with daily Masses on Monday, June 1, 2020, and a goal of recommencing weekend Masses the weekend of June 6 and 7, 2020. More details will be released closer to those dates.

“It fills my heart with so much joy to think of the doors of our Churches opening once again,” said Bishop David Zubik. I’ve heard from so many who have missed praying in their parishes. I’ve missed it, too.”