

DIOCESE OF MARQUETTE
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April 26, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Greetings in Jesus Christ.

Allow me to thank you for your patience and cooperation in these many days in which we have made sacrifices to safeguard the dignity of human life. Let us offer the pain we have experienced from the loss of the public celebration of Mass to the Lord for the salvation of those who have abandoned their faith. May this be the time that they return to the Lord!

Though the churches have been closed to this point, our parishes have been actively caring for people. I and my brother priests, deacons and sister religious pledge to continue to reach out with the love of Christ.

We are now embarking on our journey of reopening the churches. This is a gradual process, and I am grateful for your continued patience. COVID-19 will be with us for a while, and for some time we will be embracing a “new normal.” Similarly, there are risks of contracting COVID-19 when you come to church as we begin opening again, so let us all do our part to help minimize those risks. Though we are not quite at the point where we will be celebrating public Masses, we are taking steps in that direction.

In this light, I issue the following directives for the first phase of reopening the churches, **effective May 1, 2020**, the feast of St. Joseph the Worker. Let us ask St. Joseph for his guidance and protection. May he guide and protect us as he guided and protected the Holy Family. These directives will be in effect until modified or rescinded.

- I hereby extend the suspension of the celebration of public Mass in the Diocese of Marquette, and I grant a dispensation from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass.
- Parish gatherings also remain suspended, except for outdoor devotions as noted below.
- The live broadcast of private Masses, such as through live streaming on the internet, is encouraged. For the live broadcast of private Masses, if more than one priest is living in a rectory, they may concelebrate. In addition, one deacon may be present to assist, and one lector and one cantor and/or musician properly distanced may be present to exercise these ministries when broadcasting.
- Churches will be open for private prayer and Eucharistic adoration at specified times. There should be no holy water in holy water fonts. Not all churches may have in place what is needed for their regular cleaning and sanitizing by May 1. Confirm with your parish when the church will be open, and what hours it will be open.
- When you come to pray in the church, please observe the following:
 - It is required to wear a face mask inside the church. See the attached resource from the CDC regarding face masks.
 - To reduce risk and the need for cleaning, it is recommended that you use the restroom at your home and not at the church, though the restrooms at the church will be open.
 - Practice good hygiene. If possible, bring hand sanitizer with you and your own cleansing wipes to wipe down the area where you sit before and after your time of prayer. If you do not have hand sanitizer, wash your hands before you come to the church and after you leave. Avoid touching your face until you have washed your hands.
 - Keep a safe social distance of at least 6 feet from other people and observe the directions for number of persons that can be present inside the church that is set by the parish. The maximum number that can be present praying in the church is one person at each end of a pew, skipping every other pew. At their

discretion, parishes may further limit that number by roping off a section of the church to enable better cleaning depending upon their capacity for regular cleaning.

- Stay home if you are experiencing symptoms such as a fever, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, chills, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, new loss of taste or smell, or any other symptoms of illness that could be transmitted or could compromise your health.
 - Stay at home if you have been exposed to a case of COVID-19 or traveled to an area that requires a quarantine when you return until you have completed your 14-day quarantine. If you have had positive testing, stay at home until cleared by your doctor and test negative.
 - Persons age 65 and older and those at risk due to other health conditions should stay at home. According to the CDC, 8 out of 10 deaths from COVID-19 in the U.S. are people age 65 and older. If possible, parishes may set aside certain times in which only people who are at greater risk and who do not have symptoms may come to pray in the church or for confessions. Check with your parish to see if such times are available.
 - It is recommended that children under age 7 remain at home.
- The Sacrament of Penance may be celebrated by establishing an outdoor station for confessions with a screen, provided that safe distances of 6 feet are maintained. The Sacrament of Penance may also be celebrated inside churches at confession stations with a screen set up in the church, provided that the same directions are followed as for private prayer in churches as indicated above. Confessionals should not be used because they do not provide adequate ventilation and safe distance.
 - First Communion, Confirmations, RCIA, Funerals and Baptisms and the Sacrament of Matrimony may be celebrated privately with just immediate family members (and sponsors or witnesses if applicable) provided that no more than 10 persons are present, including the celebrant, and provided that the same directions are followed as for private prayer in churches as indicated above. The celebration of these same sacraments may also be postponed until the public celebration of Mass is possible.
 - Priests may celebrate the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick on an individual basis, according to the directives of the respective health care institutions. Outside of health care institutions, the priests are to follow the instructions that have been given to them to limit the spread of disease.
 - Outdoor prayer on church grounds is encouraged, such as adoration, benediction, rosary, May crowning, etc., provided that the people gathered for prayer remain in their cars, or that they keep a safe social distance of a minimum of 6 feet if they are outside.
 - If a priest is at greater risk due to age or underlying health conditions, it is advised that he refer the celebration of the above sacraments to another priest, except for the private celebration of Mass.

As we open the doors of our churches, let us remember most of all to open the doors of our hearts to the Lord.

With prayers that your heart be filled with the *Joy of the Gospel*, I am

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Most Reverend John F. Doerfler, STD, JCL
Bishop of Marquette