



CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF WICHITA

Office of the Bishop

424 N. BROADWAY | WICHITA, KANSAS 67202

May 3, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Peace be with you! After extensive consultation with medical personnel, clergy, and community leaders, I am happy to announce that public Masses may resume in the Diocese of Wichita on Wednesday May 6, 2020. As businesses in our communities begin to reopen offering their services, it is important that you also have the opportunity to attend Mass in person and to receive our Lord in Holy Communion.

Having said this, I do want to emphasize that the current pandemic is far from over. Medical experts tell us that this health crisis remains a very serious threat to the lives of many people. Because of this, I want to urge all those in the high risk population and others who so choose to continue to use the general dispensation I am giving from the obligation to attend the Sunday celebration of the Mass, which continues indefinitely during this crisis. Please do not put yourself or others at risk by attending the Masses once they resume. This is my urgent appeal to all in our Catholic Community: use extraordinary caution and good judgment in determining if you should attend Mass. No mortal sin is committed if you decide that you and your family should not attend.

Those who do choose to return to the public celebration of the Mass will find detailed guidelines, including requirements and recommendations that my leadership team and I have provided at the end of this letter. These guidelines will remain in effect during Phase One of the plan to resume public Masses, which is May 6-20, and will be reviewed and adjusted as needed. I invite you to read these guidelines carefully.

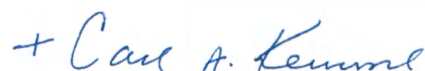
Please note that Masses will be limited in number to allow important social distancing within the liturgical spaces where the Mass will be offered. Pastors will determine how this will take place in their individual parishes, but it is important to understand that at some point, the limit may be reached and those who arrive after that time will be kindly informed that the Church or space has reached its limit. Please be understanding and considerate in these moments, as I am certain you all will be. The use of face coverings or masks, hand sanitizer and other protocols can be found in these guidelines. I would ask that you pay close attention to the important requirements for the distribution and reception of Holy Communion. I am asking our pastors and their teams to ensure that these guidelines and their requirements are followed without exceptions. Your understanding and cooperation will be critical in ensuring that we can continue to implement this plan and in time God willing to expand our ability to welcome more people to the Mass.

"Put your gifts at the service of one another." 1 Peter 4:10

In conclusion, I wish to thank you for your patience and perseverance over these past many weeks. I know and have heard that this has been very challenging for you as it has been for all our priests. I want to assure you that the decision I made to suspend public Masses in our diocese was done solely with your health and safety in mind. I hope and pray we can now begin to emerge from this current state and begin, even if gradually and with small steps, to live out our Catholic faith once again by safely attending the Mass in person and receiving Our Lord in Holy Communion.

Thank you, one and all and may God continue to bless you with Easter joy and peace! I remain

Humbly Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "+ Carl A. Kemme". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Most Reverend Carl A. Kemme D.D.
Bishop of Wichita



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Resuming Public Masses In the Catholic Diocese of Wichita Phase One May 6-20, 2020

On May 6, 2020, public masses, including funerals and weddings will resume for the Catholic Diocese of Wichita. Pastors may choose to start at a later date if they require more time for preparation. The following guidelines and restrictions are to be observed without exceptions.

1. The dispensation of the obligation to attend the Sunday celebration of the Mass continues for those who seek it in order to avoid the risk of infection of Covid-19. This dispensation will remain available until further notice.
 - Please note that Catholics *do not commit a mortal sin* when they do not attend Sunday Mass when the bishop has dispensed them from the obligation to do so.
 - Persons with higher vulnerability are requested to use this dispensation and refrain from attending the Mass in order to promote the health and welfare of every person.
 - The Catholic Church has always taught that serious illness automatically dispenses a Catholic from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass and is a valid reason to stay home.
 - Please do not take unnecessary risks with your health or adversely affect the health of others.
 - This health crisis continues to be very serious and requires all of us to do our part in reducing the spread of a deadly infection, for which we currently have no vaccine.
2. If possible, live streaming Masses should continue for those who remain at home during this period.

3. Each mass is limited to no more than 33% of the occupancy of the church and other indoor spaces used for overflow. Pastors are asked to regulate this attendance in order to provide the necessary space to practice social distancing during the liturgies. Outdoor masses during Phase One of the plan are prohibited.
4. Pastors may consider offering additional Masses to accommodate more of the faithful. If they choose to do so, they may also offer Sunday celebrations of the Mass beginning at Noon on Saturday afternoon. This temporary allowance will remain in effect until further notice.
5. Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament may resume, limiting the number of adorers in the chapels at any one time, providing the necessary space for social distancing. Pastors are asked to facilitate this for their parishes.
6. Other parish gatherings, such as adult faith formation, Bible Studies, etc. though important are not essential and should remain discontinued until further notice.

The Bishop's Leadership Team will monitor these guidelines and make adjustments as needed.

Please refer to the accompanying document, "Guidelines on Resuming Public Masses in the Catholic Diocese of Wichita," that lists guidelines for resuming public Masses.



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Guidelines for Resuming of Public Masses In the Catholic Diocese of Wichita Phase One May 6-20, 2020

The following guidelines are based upon the restrictions established for Sedgwick County. Pastors in other counties that provide different restrictions are requested to consult with Fr. David Lies, vicar general, about implementing practices that may vary from these guidelines. Those who do choose to attend public Masses are asked to abide by the following guidelines, without exceptions:

- Masses may only be celebrated indoors, in churches, chapels, gymnasiums or parish halls. Outdoor Masses are prohibited until further notice.
- Pastors should determine the best way in their church settings to limit the number of person to 33% of occupancy of their worship space.
 - Until further notice, Holy Communion is not to be distributed outside of Mass.
 - Allowing the use of only one entrance into the church would be a possibility to facilitate counting persons.
 - Prop open the entry door(s), or have a designated person hold open the door(s) to reduce multiple touches and exposure on it/them.
- Persons who live in the same house may sit together, but with no more than ten persons within in each group. Others must sit at least six feet from other individuals or groupings.
 - Marking six foot intervals on the pews could assist in prompt spacing and seating of persons.
 - Churches with fixed seating or pews should leave pews in front of and behind occupied pews vacant.

- Persons should be seated starting at the front of church and moving to the back as they enter in order to facilitate prompt spacing and seating.
- Ushers should guide persons at the back of the church to depart first followed by the next rows leading to the front of the church.
- Persons are strongly encouraged to wear masks before, during and after the Mass, with the exception of receiving Holy Communion.
- Priests are required to wear masks only during the distribution of Holy Communion.
 - If hosts for the communion of the faithful are to be consecrated, they should be placed on a second corporal towards the side of the altar. This allows the priest to pronounce the words of consecration directly over the host he will consume, with the other hosts on the altar, but not directly in front of the priest as he speaks the Eucharistic prayer.
- As much as possible, and according to availability of supplies, hand sanitizer should be made available for persons to use in church, or persons should be encouraged to bring their own.
- Adequate ventilation and air circulation in inhabited spaces should be provided with the use of HVAC systems or, weather permitting, opened windows or doors.
- In an effort to reduce exposure, only essential persons should assist with Mass. If possible, limit the number of ushers, greeters, altar servers, musicians, cantors and other ministers needed for each Mass.
 - All those who assist with Mass must maintain social distancing.
 - Persons are strongly encouraged to receive Holy Communion in the hand, or to make an Act of Spiritual Communion.
 - Priests should remind the faithful of the proper way to receive in the hand so as to allow the minister to drop the host into the palm without touching the hand or accidentally dropping the host.
 - Only priests may distribute Holy Communion to persons on the tongue.
 - If the priest's fingers happen to touch the tongue of the communicant, he must purify his hands with hand sanitizer before offering communion to the next communicant.

- Receiving the Precious Blood from the cup shall remain suppressed until further notice.
- In approaching Holy Communion, persons are required to maintain a six foot distance from each other.
 - Marking the communion aisle with tape at six foot intervals could help maintain proper spacing.
 - Six feet of space should also be ensured between persons sitting in the ends of the pews or rows of chairs and persons standing in the communion line.
- Ordinary and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion must use hand sanitizer before and after the distribution of Holy Communion.
- The extension of the Sign of Peace shall remain discontinued.
- Children's Liturgy of the Word is not to be resumed until further notice.
- The collection is not to be taken by the passing of a basket.
 - It is recommended that the persons place their offerings in a common collection basket as they enter or exit the Church.
- There is to be no offertory procession until further notice.
- Holy Water fonts should remain empty.
- People are kindly requested to use social distancing space of six (6) feet when socializing before or after the liturgy so as to avoid the spreading of infection.
 - Any other exchanges of peace or greetings before or after Mass should be omitted.
- If possible, and according to the availability of supplies, allow adequate time between Masses to disinfect pews and other areas of the church, including restrooms, cry rooms or other spaces inhabited by persons.
- Consider the removal of all hymnals, missals, prayer cards or other material kept in the pews, otherwise those items will need to be disinfected if touched.
 - Sung music should only be offered by Mass cantors and the priest. Singing by persons in attendance at Mass is discouraged to limit the possibility of the oral transmission of the COVID-19 virus.