



Bishop's Office – Bureau de l'Évêque
30 Ste-Anne, Sudbury ON P3C 5E1
Tel: (705) 674-2727 Fax/Télécopieur: (705) 674-9889
m.damphousse@ssmd.ca

MEMO TO PRIESTS AND FAITHFUL OF THE DIOCESE OF SAULT STE. MARIE

June 9, 2020

Re: REOPENING OF OUR CHURCHES FOR SUNDAY MASS – **JUNE 20-21**

Dear pastors and friends in Christ,

Ever since the pandemic of Covid-19 was declared and every aspect of our world turned upside down, the question on everyone's mind has been "When will we get back to our normal lives?" For Catholics, the obvious question is "When will we be able to return to church?" The wait has been long and difficult. I sincerely thank you for your patience and perseverance. Your collaboration in self-isolating and in respecting the health authority guidelines has allowed us to regain a safer environment and return to some normalcy of life.

Yesterday, Monday June 8, Premier Ford announced that, in most regions of Ontario (including our Diocese), places of worship can open for religious services as of this coming Friday. Although we have been looking forward to this news, it did come as a surprise. Yesterday morning, before the newsbreak, important information was distributed to all the priests. This 52-page document, prepared by a provincial ad hoc committee of experts organized by the Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Ontario, speaks to everything that needs to be done before a church can be reopened for Mass. These directives are presented as best practices for the safety of our parishioners. Needless to say, priests and parishes have much to do before they are ready to reopen their churches.

An emergency zoom meeting for priests took place today, June 9, to inform them and to confirm a plan of action so that we can all work together and agree to a common date of reopening.

I therefore wish to announce that the Catholic parishes in the Diocese of Sault Ste. Marie will open their doors **on June 20-21, 2020**, if all preparatory measures have been completed in each respective parish.

The long months during which we have been deprived of Eucharistic celebrations within our parishes have undoubtedly brought us to more deeply appreciate the value of this sacrament. Hopefully, this deprivation has strengthened our faith in the Eucharist and heightened our desire to live together as a strong faith community. I pray for each parish and its priests, as you reunite to proclaim together: "How great is the mystery of faith!"

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+Marcel Damphousse
Bishop of Sault Ste. Marie