

GUIDELINES FOR THE RESUMPTION OF PUBLIC MASSES IN THE DIOCESE OF SACRAMENTO

REVISED – MAY 26, 2020

“Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own” (Acts 4:32)

In preparation for the resumption of the public celebration of Masses in the Diocese of Sacramento, a set of guidelines has been prepared and must be applied with great prudence and diligence throughout the diocese. The guidelines, per the recommendations issued by the World Health Organization (WHO), the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and state/local authorities, respectful of, and in accord with, the established norms for celebrating Masses, provide direction for the pastors, parochial administrators, and priests of the diocese to resume the celebration of the Masses publicly in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. The guidelines are intended to ensure safety of ALL the faithful at the celebration of the Eucharist.

A. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

1. The decree issued by Bishop Soto on March 13, 2020, dispensing ALL the faithful from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass and Holy Days of Obligation remains in effect, including the instructions provided in the decree. Provide guidance to the faithful on how to continue observing the third commandment, Keep Holy the Lord’s Day.
2. Those who fall in the vulnerable category, i.e. individuals age 65+ and persons with compromised health conditions, are asked to continue with the shelter-in-place ordinances instituted by state and local authorities. This also applies for priests, deacons, and ministers who are in the same vulnerable categories.
3. Physical distancing is to be observed during the celebration of Mass by every person present. Individuals living in the same household may remain close to one another but must observe social distancing with other individuals or other households. All ministers (priests, deacons, extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, lectors, altar servers, cantors, ministers of hospitality, etc.) are expected to practice social distancing at each Mass. The usual and common socialization before and after Masses must be conducted in accord with the restrictions currently in place.
4. A person who has a respiratory infection and may be exhibiting symptoms associated with the COVID-19 virus or otherwise is asked to refrain from coming to Mass. The same instruction applies particularly for priests, deacons and other ministers. A priest/pastor must provide proper and compassionate instructions to his parishioners regarding this important precautionary measure. A priest who is by himself in a parish/ministry and has a respiratory infection must communicate with the Vicar General in order to

facilitate providing assistance and coverage for the Mass.

5. Sufficient means to disinfect or sanitize the location of the Mass must be available at each Mass. Every person in the celebration of the Mass must be able to sanitize themselves as often as it is required and whenever necessary before, during, and after the Mass. The Church, hall, or other venues appropriate to celebrate the Mass must adhere to and be able to accommodate the safety recommendations provided by civil authorities, e.g. social distancing, proper ventilation, and proper entrance/exit doors.
6. **Outdoor Masses and “Drive-in Style” Masses are not allowed at this time.**
7. Pastors/Parochial Administrators are to schedule or re-schedule Masses that accommodate the necessary time to prepare for each Mass that ensure the health and safety of the parishioners, particularly the task of disinfecting the worship space. Pastors/Parochial administrators who deem necessary to celebrate Masses beyond what is prescribed must individually call the Bishop’s office for permission. Additional daily Masses are permitted, if necessary, in accord with the established norms. Encourage the faithful to attend the weekday Masses whenever possible.
8. Parishioners are encouraged to wear masks and gloves during the service but must take them off during Communion.
9. Pastors and Parochial Administrators are to provide parishioners with sufficient instructions regarding these guidelines. Pastors and Parochial Administrators should begin soon to prepare the parishioners for the gradual resumption of the public celebrations of the Masses even though the date for lifting the suspension is still not determined.
10. Parishes are to consider livestreaming at least one of the Masses during the weekend, if they are not already doing so.
11. **Pastors and Parochial administrators must plan for a system in their respective parishes that will facilitate contact tracing in cases where there is an instance of an infection, be prepared to inform the diocese, local health authorities, and the parishioners.**
12. **Priests and deacons are advised to be tested for COVID-19. Testing is now more readily available for those who are asymptomatic. Check with the local county public health agency.**