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May 8, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Greetings in Jesus Christ.

Let us go to the altar of God! The absence of the public celebration of Mass has weighed heavily on our hearts. With joy we are embarking on the second phase of reopening by resuming the public celebration of Mass, the summit and source of our life.

Resuming the public celebration of Mass does not mean a return to normal. As we strive to extend the love of Christ to one another, we still need to observe social distancing precautions. Participating in the public celebration of Mass entails a risk of contracting COVID-19. Let us all do our part to reduce that risk as much as we can.

Social distance does not mean that we distance our hearts from one another. Our hearts can still touch. When we assemble, remember those around you and greet each other warmly. Let us be united in Christ and in heart as one People of God.

In this light, I rescind the directives that I issued on April 27, 2020 and issue the following directives for the second phase of reopening, effective Tuesday, May 19, 2020. These directives will be in effect until modified or rescinded.

- Given the limited capacity of the churches and the recommendation that those with greater risk stay home, I grant a dispensation from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass.
- We will offer the public celebration of Mass and the other sacraments beginning on May 19, 2020. I ask your patience because some of the parishes in the diocese will not have everything in place to begin offering public Masses by that date. Moreover, a priest may refrain from the public celebration of the sacraments if he is at greater risk. Check with your local parish to learn when public Masses will resume there.
- Church capacity will be limited. People are to sit in every other pew and sit at least six feet apart from each other in the pews. Those who live in the same household may sit closer together. Depending on the size of the church and the number of parishioners, it is possible that not all parishioners will be able to attend Mass every Saturday evening/Sunday. Thus, keep in contact with your local parish for their provisions.
- Weather permitting, Mass and the other sacraments may be celebrated outdoors on church grounds to allow more people to participate.
- If possible, other means to increase capacity may be used, such as a closed-circuit large television in the parish hall where chairs can be set up at least 6 feet distance from each other on all sides.

- The live broadcast of Masses, such as through live streaming on the internet, is encouraged, to provide a means of participation for those who cannot attend.
- When you come to church for the celebration of the sacraments or to pray privately, please observe the following:
  - Please wear a face mask inside the church out of concern for each other. See the attached resource from the CDC regarding face masks. Because priests are far enough away from the assembly when they are in the sanctuary, they do not need to wear a mask there. However, they will wear a mask when distributing Communion.
  - 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 when you arrive and when you leave. 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 the number of persons that can be present inside the church that is set by the parish.
  - 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.
  - It is recommended that persons age 65 and older and those at risk due to other health conditions 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 are encouraged to set aside certain Masses and designated times for private prayer for people who are at greater risk and who do not have symptoms.
  - It is recommended that pre-school age children remain at home.
- Procedure for the distribution of Holy Communion.
  - Communion will be distributed under the form of the Sacred Body only.
  - You are strongly encouraged to receive Communion in the hand as a temporary measure during the pandemic and as an act of charity toward the minister of Communion and the lay faithful in the Communion line.
  - Follow the directions given at the parish for coming forward to receive Communion and observe the safe distance of at least six feet from other people in line. If possible, parishes should have hand sanitizer available in the aisle for the people to sanitize their hands before receiving Communion.

- The congregational sign of peace is to be omitted.
- The omission of singing may be considered to shorten the time of the Mass to reduce potential exposure. However, singing is not prohibited. If there is singing, choirs should be omitted, and the music led by a musician and cantor.
- Hymnals, Bibles, prayer cards, etc. should be removed from the pews. Disposable worship aids may be printed if copyright permission is obtained. The people are encouraged to take any worship aids home. If they are left in the pews they are to be discarded after the Mass and not reused.
- Holy Water is to be removed from Holy Water fonts. Parishes may make other safe provisions for the distribution of Holy Water, such as making it available in individual, sanitized bottles. A large Holy Water dispenser should not be used. People may also bring water in their own containers to be blessed at designated times.
- 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. In general, confessionals should not be used because they do not provide adequate ventilation and safe distance.
- Baptisms, Confirmations, the Sacrament of Matrimony and Funeral Masses are celebrated with the same limitations on attendance, social distancing, etc., as indicated above.
- 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.
- Parish gatherings such as funeral lunches, coffee and donuts, etc. remain suspended.

As we resume the public celebration of the sacraments, let us remember most of all to open 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