

May 27, 2020



Dear Catholic Faithful of Washington State,

Today the governor announced directives for resuming public worship. Like the governor, we bishops remain focused on public health and working on behalf of the common good. We bishops across Washington state look forward to safely resuming public celebration of the Eucharist according to the strict protocols as outlined by each of our dioceses and the archdiocese.

We are committed to the health and safety of parishioners and the greater community. Parish leaders have received our reopening guidelines as promulgated by each local diocesan bishop. Once parish leaders have informed their local bishop that the required safety measures are in place, they may resume celebration of the Eucharist according to the new protocols. Worship may begin as early as this weekend.

Reopening will not mean an immediate return to all of our practices prior to the suspension of public Masses. Your patience, understanding, and cooperation are appreciated. Kindly refer to the new protocols for Mass that will soon be posted on your diocesan webpage. Under the new protocols for Mass:

- Anyone experiencing a fever or symptoms must remain at home and not attend Mass.
- Parishioners may receive Communion only in the hand.
- Practice strict social distancing of 6 feet apart from members of different households.
- Parishioners must wear masks.
- Mass will be of shorter duration.

Safety measures are employed, not out of fear, but out of love for neighbor and concern for the vulnerable. As the impact of the novel coronavirus can be unpredictable, we will work with public health authorities to ensure that the highest standards of safety are implemented.

The dispensation to attend Sunday Mass is still in effect. Thus, while it is possible for the faithful to begin to return to Mass, it is not an obligation. Livestreaming of Masses will continue, and to maintain social distancing the numbers of parishioners permitted to attend a single Mass will be limited. While we are separated physically, we are still part of one church community.

As we reopen our churches for Mass, we know that these measures are temporary and will be updated over time. We are implementing safety measures to protect the health of our community and care for the vulnerable. We trust in the Lord, and we look forward to the day when we may all attend Mass together.

In the heart of Christ,

Most Rev. Paul D. Etienne
Archbishop of Seattle

Most Rev. Joseph J. Tyson
Bishop of Yakima

Most Rev. Thomas A. Daly
Bishop of Spokane

Most Rev. Eusebio Elizondo, M.Sp.S.
Auxiliary Bishop of Seattle

Most Rev. Daniel H. Mueggenborg
Auxiliary Bishop of Seattle