



Very Reverend Michel J. Mulloy
Diocesan Administrator
Diocese of Rapid City



Most Reverend Donald E. DeGrood
Bishop of Sioux Falls

**JOINT STATEMENT:
THE SPIRITUAL LEADERS OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC
DIOCESES OF SIOUX FALLS AND RAPID CITY**

Plan for resuming public Masses once social distancing and hygiene practices are in place

May 1, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Our decision on March 17, 2020 to suspend public Masses was made after much prayer, consultation, and after having reviewed the recommendations of public health authorities. This decision was focused on preventing the spread of the COVID-19 virus especially for the most vulnerable. We know this extraordinary measure has been difficult for all the faithful. We are grateful for the acts of charity and expressed understanding that we have witnessed in our midst during this time.

This makes us all the more pleased to bring you good spiritual news in this Easter season. Today, we write to share that we have initiated a process that will lead to Masses being prayed publicly in the Dioceses of Sioux Falls and Rapid City. What is most important for you to know at this time is that the decision on when parishioners may resume their participation in Holy Mass in their parish church and their reception of Holy Communion will be made by your pastor, in consultation with guidelines that we will be providing them at the diocesan level.

Determining the date when public Masses will begin in each parish will include developing a plan for implementation, setting up procedures for maintaining social distancing and proper hygiene and communicating all of this to parishioners. Public Masses will not begin before May 15.

Several important points we ask you to keep in mind:

- The faithful will remain dispensed from the obligation to attend Holy Mass on Sunday until further notice. This measure is in place so that you can prudently discern your own attendance. If you feel unsafe, you should feel no guilt or shame in staying home. Similarly, you should feel a freedom to permit others who are comfortable attending to do so.
- We ask for your understanding: anyone who enters our churches or chapels are expected to follow the social distancing and personal hygiene practices so that we all respect the physical, psychological, and spiritual well-being of others who are also in attendance.
- We ask for your patience: communities have been affected differently by COVID-19 and each parish is unique. There is no uniform sanctuary size or parish demographic. Priests also vary in their physical health. For reasons like these, each diocese will create separate guidance for

parishes. Public Masses are very likely to resume at varying times over the coming weeks and with variations in the measures put in place to uphold social distancing practices. Please await instruction from your pastor.

- We ask for your flexibility: these guidelines will remain subject to change. Changes will be based on the course of the pandemic and hospitalization rates. We will remain in contact with medical professionals and civic authorities so that we become aware of changing trends that may merit our reinstating restrictions on the public celebration of Holy Mass.

We urge all Catholics to pray for the sick and dying, for those caring for them, for the unemployed, and indeed for all, that the Lord may bring healing, courage, and the joy born of his love, and to especially invoke the intercession of Mary, Mother of the Church and St. Joseph, Protector of the Church.

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References

www.sfcatholic.org

www.rapidcitydiocese.org