



Coronavirus (COVID-19) What you need to know Diocese of Colorado Springs

Newsletter - April 24, 2020

What to expect when we return to public Masses

When the current health restrictions are eased and we are able to start gathering for Mass again, it is important for all of us to understand that things won't immediately go back to normal.

Our elected officials in consultation with health experts are currently working on guidelines with the goal of possibly easing restrictions in the next weeks and months ahead. Concurrently the Diocesan staff has been planning for how public worship will be celebrated taking into consideration any new guidelines.

Based on the number of letters and emails we have received we know the desire to participate in the liturgy and receive the Eucharist is incredibly strong. We ask everyone to please be patient and charitable as we work our way through these difficult times.



We are still working out the details of how to celebrate public Masses when we are able to resume worshipping together. The list below are some things we need to keep in mind.

- **Social distancing will likely still be in place.** We should be prepared for only a certain number of pews to be available for use. The six feet separation restriction will likely still be required. You may not be able to sit in your favorite pew. You may be asked to wear a mask to Mass to guard against germ spread. If you are experiencing symptoms of illness, please stay home.
- **Attendance at any one Mass will be limited.** We expect restrictions to remain in place for any large gatherings, so we are working on a fair and equitable

way to help parishes determine a way to do this. It may be that parishioners sign-up for a particular Mass or we have assigned days, or we determine attendance by last name. In any case it is vital that parish staffs have a good way to communicate with parishioners.

- **General dispensation from the Sunday obligation remains.** For those who are in higher risk groups or have symptoms or if you must remain at home, you are not required to attend Mass. You should still plan to keep the Sabbath holy by participating in the livestream or prerecorded Masses.
- **Liturgical changes will likely occur.** For those attending Mass, similar protocols like those in March will likely be in place, e.g. distribution of Holy Communion under one species, no exchanging the sign of peace, no holy water fonts, no hymnals, etc.

Everyone needs to understand even though parishes will take all reasonable precautions, and sanitize as best they can, there is still a risk of infection for anyone who attends a public Mass. No one should expect that they will be safer in church than in any other public space.

Please keep in mind we will all experience challenges and frustration as we navigate through this. A parish might not be able to accommodate everyone at a particular Mass, you may be asked to attend at a different time or day. Differences between how each parish will implement these guidelines are expected to happen. Our Diocese covers ten counties, we expect each parish to implement these guidelines in accordance with local government policy, keeping in mind the Diocesan guidelines.

We encourage your feedback as to how these guidelines are put in place at your parish at info@diocs.org