



Date: 23 April 2020  
Re: UPDATE #6 — Phased Reopening

Approved: *+ Austin A. Vetter*

*With a mind for the safety of all, Bishop Vetter in consultation Bishop Warfel of the Diocese of Great Falls/Billings, the priests of the Diocese of Helena, issues the following directives, effective immediately:*

**The obligation to attend Sunday Mass continues to be dispensed.** The Bishop's live-stream Masses will continue.

**Once a parish plan has been submitted and approved that covers all these issues,** parish Masses may resume, with reduced capacity, on Sunday, April 26 (*not Saturday night, April 25*), with the following restrictions and including any local governmental determinations:

- Social distancing of 6 feet must be maintained and managed:
  - When entering and leaving the church
  - With seating — between non-family members
  - During the Communion procession
  - Provisions need to be made in advance to ensure social distancing at all times; ropes and tape may be used.
- The invitation to the Sign of Peace is to be omitted, and no sign of peace offered.
- There is not to be a procession of the offertory gifts of bread and wine, they will be brought forward from a credence table in the sanctuary.
- Priests may wish to remind the faithful that they are not required to receive communion.
- Distribution of Holy Communion should be offered in the hand only, with just care and reverence. Tongs or other tools are not to be used.
- Communion under the Precious Blood is not to be offered at this time.
- In the communion line, people are to come up in single file line, maintaining a distance of six feet from the person in front of them.
- For offertory collections, do not pass the baskets, have them available in another suitable location.
- No social gatherings before or after Mass, e.g., coffee and donuts.
- Ensure proper cleaning of frequently touched surfaces in the church, following CDC guidelines, and if possible, provide hand sanitizer at the church entrance.
- Remove holy water from the holy water fonts, sprinkling rite may be used, if social distancing can be maintained.
- Because of the difficulty in sanitizing hymnals and missalettes, disposable liturgical aids are recommended, if needed.

**If adequate spacing and social distancing and cleaning CANNOT be managed**, or you cannot do all of the requirements; the most that you can have at Mass is 10 or you cannot reopen the parish at this time.

**Communion to the Homebound** remains suspended due to the health risks to some of our most vulnerable parishioners. Parishes should continue regular contact, by phone, Facetime or other electronic communication, to those who are homebound.

**UPDATED: Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament** – Bishop Vetter encourages each parish to set some time aside each week for a celebration of the Rite of Eucharistic Adoration and Benediction; social distancing must be managed and maintained.

**UPDATED: The Elect and Candidates for Full Communion:** The Easter Season and Pentecost are appropriate times for the Easter sacraments provided adequate social distancing is maintained.

**UPDATED: Public celebrations of the Sacraments are again permitted**—as long as adequate spacing and social distancing are managed and maintained:

- **Baptisms:** may be celebrated. New water is to be used and blessed for each baptism.
- **Confirmation:** The Deanery Confirmations remain canceled. Bishop Vetter has granted pastors and priest administrators the Faculty to Confirm High School Seniors during the months of April, May, and June 2020 and these celebrations can be done at Mass. Confirmation for those who are not seniors in High School is postponed until Bishop Vetter celebrates Confirmation in the spring of 2021.
- **First Eucharist celebrations:** can be celebrated with the limitation stated above.
- **Weddings:** can now be celebrated with the limitation stated above.
- **Reconciliation:** can be celebrated with the limitation stated above.
- **Funerals:** may be celebrated with the limitation stated above.
- **Anointing of the Sick:** Priests are asked to be courageous and generously respond to those who are in proximate danger of death and request anointing and viaticum. The directions, procedures and policies of all medical and care facilities must be strictly followed when visiting the ill. The use of an instrument, such as a glove or cotton swab is allowed for the anointing. If you anoint a person who has COVID-19, outside a hospital, please check with your County Health Department with regard to the need to self-quarantine.

**Parish and Chancery Offices.** We are working on a plan to reopen parish and chancery offices.

All priests are encouraged to provide reasonable and prudent measures to ensure everyone's safety, including their own. Everyone is encouraged to continue to practice good hygiene. People who feel sick should remain at home as should vulnerable and at-risk populations. People and priests may wear a mask for the celebration of the sacraments.