

## **RE-OPENING CONSIDERATIONS**

*On Monday May 18 we anticipate specifics of the state's planned phases to re-open and what limitations those phases will mandate as we move forward. It is important that parishes start planning. Through our Boston representatives we have lobbied to have the forthcoming capacity mandate expressed in a percentage of a church and/or parish center/gym's current full capacity rather than a fixed number. Given the worship space variances and Mass attendance numbers, every parish may need to take a different approach in complying with guidelines. You need to start with;*

- 1. An understanding of your church's seating capacity, as well as any other large gathering spaces that might be utilized. What are the most active entrances and traffic patterns.*
- 2. Your estimation on the number of people who might attend based on past attendance.*

**The previous diocesan restrictions and state guidelines will continue including:**

- Omission of the Sign of Peace
- No communion by the cup
- Communion in the hand only
- Holy Water fonts to remain empty and covered
- Social distancing (6ft minimum) to be abided by at all times
- Masks will be required

Bishop also anticipates extending the general dispensation.

### **What can parishes do now?**

**Order the necessary cleaning materials along with hand sanitizers/wipes and masks.**

- Most parishioners will already have masks as they are required in public, but it would be safe to have single use masks available.
- There are also many sewers making and donating cloth masks.
  - Here is one site to request cloth mask donations  
<https://www.diy.masks4w.mass.com/requests?fbclid=IwAR1DPi7GWWdE-r50Fg2LuRQY10x-CKkPPRBhbm6LTZA0ak6-ai5PbOo66sE>
- Hand sanitizers should be available at every entrance. Encourage parishioners to bring their own. Alcohol content of 60% or higher.
- Further guidance on proper cleaning protocols will be issued Monday.

Review your worship space in light of anticipated limited capacities and allowing for social distancing. Identify and address high risk areas

- Turn-off water fountains and cover them.
- Remove hymnals and other prayer cards, Mass guides etc.
- Make sure doors at entrances can be left open for contact-free entry and departure.
- Determine entrance and exit patterns and procedures for proper social distancing. Can doors be utilized for just entrance or exit so as to create one way traffic pattern.
- Mark restrooms for emergency use only
- Determine if church windows can be open to allow fresh air into the church.
- At the minimum start by blocking off every other pew.
- If you are concerned that you have Masses that may exceed state capacity, is it possible to add Masses?
- What about alternative sites?
  - Use of parish center/gym for liturgy or overflow (can you connect sound systems)
  - Outdoor alternate sites can be considered however parishes should be mindful of the need for sound systems and Altar set-up as well as weather considerations, seating and bathroom access.
- Expanded usher responsibilities
  - Every parish will need ushers to facilitate protocols
  - Number needed will be based on number of entrances
  - Given the increased duties, current ushers may need to be supplemented with young members. Consider asking parishioners with law enforcement backgrounds to help out as they tend to have experience dealing with the public in controlled situations.
- Identify and begin working with ushers on keeping count of Mass attendees and ensuring that all attendees have masks and that social distancing is maintained.
  - Obviously families can sit closer together, but there must be 6 feet between family groups and the next attendee(s).
  - Consider marking the aisles in your worship space with tape indicating the 6 foot distance, this will help with the distribution of communion and the exiting of the congregation at the conclusion of Mass.

- What if parishioners show up after you have reached your capacity?  
Will there be an overflow location that ushers can direct them to use?
- How can you collect offertory
  - No baskets can be passed hand-to-hand.
  - Baskets with extended arms that ushers can use are OK.
  - Baskets at the entrances for parishioners as they arrive to drop off their envelopes/offering would be another option. This is best collected at the beginning to avoid back-ups when people are exiting church. These baskets should be clearly marked.

### Other considerations

- Identify space to resume Sacrament of Reconciliation
- Consider a scheduled time(s) that your church will be open for private prayer.
  - It will need to be monitored for compliance
  - A cleaning protocol must be developed
- Resumption of in church funerals, baptisms and weddings
  - Must abide by state capacity guidelines

### Develop with maintenance staff a cleaning strategy.

- Pastors will need staff/volunteers to thoroughly wipe down high exposure areas after every Mass and church opening.
- Make sure product eliminates coronavirus and of application requirements and is at minimum 60% alcohol content.
- Additional guidance will be forthcoming.

### Review rectory/parish office operations and staffing.

- Schedule staff to maintain social distancing and limited direct exposure.
- Limit public hours during initial phases.
- Diocesan HR Department will be providing additional guidance.