

# *Catholic Diocese of Peoria*

## Spalding Pastoral Center

419 NE Madison Avenue  
Peoria, IL 61603  
309.671.1550

May 29, 2020

Dear Brother Priests:

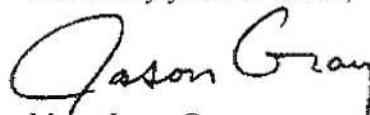
With the Governor's announcement yesterday, the restrictions on religious services in Illinois have been rescinded and replaced with guidance for safe practices. This is a positive development in the protection of our religious liberties and for the return of our parishes to normal worship.

Permission has already been given for churches to open for baptisms, weddings, funerals and private prayer. Bishop Jenky has given permission for public Mass to resume in our parishes beginning June 6, provided that each church is certified, and the congregation is limited to 25% of the church's capacity, according the guidance given by the State of Illinois. Please be aware of the following:

- Many pastors have planned for outdoor Masses, drive-in Masses, or streamed Masses for Pentecost Sunday, all of which are laudable.
- Parish staff should be actively preparing now for returning to public Mass on Trinity Sunday. When we reopen for public Mass, every effort must be made to protect our parishioners' health. Although we have enhanced our health and safety measures, the faithful should be aware that there is still some risk of infection. The faithful continue to be dispensed from the obligation of attending Mass, and those in the at-risk population may choose not to return immediately.
- Pastors should calculate 25% of each church's capacity to determine the maximum attendance that can be safely admitted when we reopen.
- A system to limit attendance is not required if you do not expect to exceed 25% of your church's capacity. In some parishes, an on-line reservation system might not be necessary if it is possible to stream Mass to an overflow location or to mobile devices for those who are not able to enter the church building.
- Volunteers will still be needed to assist as ushers and cleaners according to the Protocols and Self-Certification Checklist issued by the Diocese of Peoria. Disinfectants should be appropriate for the surface being cleaned.
- The modifications indicated on the checklist must still be observed (i.e. no sign of peace, no Communion under both species, etc.). Please communicate these changes to your parishioners so they feel comfortable as we reopen.
- The warnings on the checklist about risk and about those who may be ill must be posted in writing in your church buildings.
- In the prudent judgment of the pastor, it may be preferable to begin with small steps as we work gradually to resume our regular Sunday routines over time.

Let us use this time to plan for a safe, orderly, and reverent reopening. In the next week, I ask your staff to prepare the Self-Certification Checklist and send it to [reopen@cdop.org](mailto:reopen@cdop.org). The checklist for your parish must be submitted before you can reopen for public Mass.

Fraternally yours in Christ,

  
Msgr. Jason Gray