

# DIOCESE OF SAN BERNARDINO



## OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

June 16, 2021

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Our Lord:

Peace and wellbeing!

As a Diocesan community, we have eagerly awaited the time when our parishes, ministries and schools could safely reopen, in accordance with public health guidelines. Although the risks and impacts of COVID-19 in California have significantly diminished, we are not yet truly in a pandemic-free world. As a Diocesan Church, we have journeyed in Faith and Hope, ever thankful for the care and vigilance of our priests and pastoral coordinators in watching over our parishioners for the last 15 months. For this, we give thanks!

While many operational restrictions have been lifted effective June 15<sup>th</sup>, let us continue to remember our responsibility in caring and protecting one another – using sensible public health precautions in each of our parishes, always mindful of the health, safety and well-being of our parishioners, our clergy, staff and volunteers.

The attached 'reopening directives' should be implemented in our parishes, effective Saturday, June 19<sup>th</sup>, with respect to all sacramental, liturgical and worship activities held within our churches. As in the past, Pastors/Administrators/Pastoral Coordinators may choose to delay this complete re-opening until they believe they are ready for this important step.

Specific directives for reopening of parish offices, including directives affecting employees, volunteers and visitors will be issued at a later date, as workplace requirements for masks are still being reviewed. I am hopeful that we can issue our directives for the workplace in the next few days.

I also wish to let you know that effective July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021, I will be issuing a Decree to lift the current general dispensation from the Sunday Mass and Holy Day obligation that we have had since the beginning of the pandemic in March 2020. On July 1<sup>st</sup>, I will be inviting all of the Catholic Faithful to return to Mass on Sundays and Holy Days in order to fulfill their obligation to attend Mass. Welcome back home! Those who cannot attend Mass because of age (65 years and older), sickness, or disability will continue to be excused and are encouraged to make Sundays holy through personal prayer or viewing the televised or livestreamed Mass sponsored by their local parish.

Should you have any specific questions with respect to these directives, please contact our EOC Director, Ann Marie Gallant. Should Ann Marie not be able to resolve the question due to its sacramental nature, Ann Marie will contact our Diocesan staff for final determination. As a Diocesan Church we have been true in keeping the Faith alive under the very trying conditions of the last 15 months; many have suffered and paid the price of this pandemic. Let us especially keep in prayer the many loved ones who passed away from the Coronavirus; may these loved ones rest in the eternal peace of Jesus, Our Good Shepherd. Our Faith has sustained us in never losing hope that this day of our reopening would be a reality and not just a dream. As we reopen our parishes next weekend for the special celebration of Father's Day, let us offer thanks to God for his fatherly protection and care of all of us, and let us thank our priests for being true spiritual fathers in our parishes. I ask the blessing of the Holy Trinity and Our Lady of Guadalupe over you and your families as we return home to our parish communities to sing, to pray aloud, to offer each other a smile of peace, and to rededicate our lives in the message of the Gospel through the Mass so that People's lives might be filled with a New Hope. Thank you for your great Faith and please know I keep you in my constant prayers. Our Lady of Guadalupe, pray for us! Saint Bernardine of Siena, pray for us!

Sincerely yours in Our Lord Jesus Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alberto Rojas". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Most Reverend Alberto Rojas  
Bishop of San Bernardino

AR/elp



## **CHURCH RE-OPENING: GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES**

### **Re-Opening Guidelines for Worship**

**Effective June 19, 2021**

#### **General Policy Directives**

1. Effective June 19, 2021, all parishes within the Diocese of San Bernardino may operate under the sacramental/liturgical/worship guidelines contained herein.
2. Parishes, at the election of the Pastor/Administrator/Pastoral Coordinator, may continue with more stringent requirements, if the parish is located within a low or very low vaccination rate zone as listed on the EOC listing of vaccination rates for at-risk parishes. The EOC will send a weekly listing of at-risk parishes for parishes to consult.
3. Pastors/Administrators/Pastoral Coordinators should re-emphasize to parishioners, staff and volunteers the critical importance of remaining at home if they are ill, or if a member of their household is ill, given these relaxed reopening standards, as the pandemic continues to threaten certain communities within Riverside and San Bernardino counties.

#### **Changes to Capacity/Social Distancing Regulations**

1. Parishes may continue to offer sacraments, liturgies and worship services indoors, without any COVID protocol restrictions, if indoor seating is 5,000 or less.
2. Parishes may continue to offer sacraments, liturgies and worship services outdoors, without any COVID protocol restrictions, if outdoor seating is 10,000 or less, as weather conditions permit.
3. There are no limitations on seating capacity other than those given by the applicable fire department or city/county agencies for the parish buildings.
4. Although there are no limitations on seating capacity, parishes are still encouraged to maintain a three (3) feet distance between seats.

#### **Changes to Sanitizing/Hygiene Protocols**

1. Deep cleaning before and after each service is no longer necessary.
2. Parishes are encouraged to maintain a thorough once daily cleaning on Saturdays and Sundays, and during periods of high church use.
3. Priests/ushers/deacons/sacristans are encouraged to use hand sanitizers, before and after services, to ensure safest protocols, given interaction with numerous individuals in the performance of their pastoral and liturgical duties.

#### **Changes to Mask Requirement**

1. Masks are no longer required, indoors, for vaccinated persons.
2. Ushers/volunteers are strongly encouraged to wear masks, due to interaction with numerous individuals who may or may not be vaccinated.
3. Due to the risk of marginalizing or stigmatizing those who elect *not* to receive the vaccine, parishes are encouraged to post signage which states:

*Parishioners/attendees/guests are encouraged to wear masks, if health conditions exist, or as a personal choice, to ensure maximum safety/precautions for all.*

## Changes to Liturgical/Sacramental/Worship Directives

*(Except as noted, the following items/areas may be resumed as before the COVID pandemic. However, Pastors/Administrators/Pastoral Coordinators may elect to maintain current COVID protocols or continue prior pastoral COVID directives, as deemed necessary/preferred by their parishes, due to continued COVID risk in their particular geographic area.)*

1. *Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament:* Maintain three (3) feet separation, if possible.
2. *Altar Servers:* No restrictions
3. *Baptisms:* No immersion fonts; continue current practice for baptismal water.
4. *Bulletins:* No restrictions
5. *Candles:* No open flames outdoors, at any time.
6. *Capacity Limits:* Three (3) feet separation recommended; parish may decide.
7. *Chalice for Priests:* Priests should use their own chalice for the Mass.
8. *Collection Baskets:* Pole extensions, if preferred.
9. *Communion on the Hand or Tongue:* Continue current practice of one line for each. Priest, Deacon, or Eucharistic Minister may say "The Body of Christ" to each communicant who then responds, "Amen."
10. *Communion Cup for Assembly:* The Blood of Christ is not given to the Assembly at this time.
11. *Communion Cup for Concelebrants:* Individual cups are to be used for priests and deacons.
12. *Confessions:* Sanitize seating at the conclusion of regularly scheduled service.
13. *Confirmations:* Continue current practice of cotton swabs for Chrism on forehead.
14. *Crucifixes/Crosses:* Kissing/touching not permitted by general congregation; priests may do so if crucifix/cross is sanitized after service.
15. *Funerals:* Sprinkling of casket with Holy Water is now permitted.
16. *Graveside Services:* Adhere to the requirements of the cemetery operator.
17. *Holy Water:* Bottled individually for take home use only; no Holy Water in small fonts or Baptismal Fonts. The sprinkling of Holy Water on persons or objects is permitted from a clean source of Holy Water.
18. *Hospitality:* No self-help; servers continue to wear masks and gloves.
19. *Incense:* Not at this time.
20. *LiveStream Masses:* May continue, but not as substitution for obligation, except as noted.
21. *Masks for Parishioners/Attendees/Guests:* Honor system for general parishioners.
22. *Masks for Celebrants:* See "Changes to Mask Requirements" above.
23. *Masks for Ushers/Volunteers:* See "Changes to Mask Requirements" above.
24. *Missalettes:* Not at this time, due to common shared use.
25. *Photography:* Mask required for photographer; no masks for those vaccinated.
26. *Physical Distance:* Three (3) feet separation recommended; parish may decide.

27. *Procession*: Continue three (3) feet separation for all processions.
28. *Offertory*: No restrictions
29. *Our Father Recitation*: Refrain from holding hands with other persons.
30. *Pastoral Greetings of Parishioners*: Refrain from hand-to-hand greetings; outdoor group/individual exchanges for less than fifteen (15) minutes is encouraged.
31. *Private Prayer/Devotion*: No restrictions
32. *Recessional*: No restrictions
33. *Sacred Objects/Statues*: Kissing/touching not permitted by general congregation; priests may do so if object is sanitized after conclusion of service.
34. *Sanitation of Pews*: Daily on weekends or after major liturgical/worship event.
35. *Sanitizer for Priests/Deacons*: Continue availability and use.
36. *Sanitizer for Eucharistic Ministers*: Continue availability and use.
37. *Sanitizer for Ushers/Volunteers*: Continue availability and use.
38. *Sign of Peace at Altar for Priests/Deacons*: Permitted without any physical contact or touching.
39. *Sign of Peace among Assembly*: Permitted without any physical contact or touching.
40. *Singing by Cantors*: No restrictions
41. *Singing by Choirs*: No restrictions
42. *Singing by Assembly*: No restrictions
43. *Vestments*: Refrain from using common vestments; priests and deacons should only wear their own vestments.
44. *Visits to Homebound*: No mask required if minister (priest, deacon, or lay minister) is vaccinated; vaccination not required for homebound parishioner.
45. *Visits to Hospitals/Convalescent Homes*: Adhere to the requirements of the facility; vaccination not required for the ill patient.
46. *Votive Candles*: No restrictions
47. *Weddings*: No restrictions