



**DIOCESE OF LANSING**  
M I C H I G A N

**A Plan to Gradually Restore Full Participation  
in the Sacramental Life of the Church**

**SUMMARY (EDITED)**

“The liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; it is also the font from which all her power flows” (SC 10). I am permitting the parishes of the Diocese to begin the public celebration of Mass as of Friday, May 29, 2020.

After consultation with the Presbyteral Council and their unanimous consent, guidelines are being presented to prepare for these celebrations. There may be pastors and parishes who do not feel prepared to begin these celebrations at this time; parishioners need to be patient. Catholics of the Diocese of Lansing remain dispensed from the obligation to participate at Sunday Mass until the end of July 2020, at which time the dispensation may be extended.

While the full text of the guidelines follow, this summary is meant to be a guide to those who wish to participate in Mass at those parishes which will be open. Love of neighbor must guide our behavior even more than a desire to be at Mass. Please, do not come to Church if you are elderly and/or have an underlying medical condition or if you are sick. We also discourage children under seven from attending since they may find it difficult to follow social distancing and other hygienic behavior. You must wear a mask at Church. Even if you feel this is unnecessary for yourself, consider the peace of mind and safety of your fellow Catholics. Church capacity will be limited to 25%, with certain pews roped off and social distancing expected. This means that once the church is at capacity, you should be prepared to be turned away; accept such a decision graciously and continue to offer your sacrifices for the benefit of all our sisters and brothers. Since breathing on someone is a method of disease transfer, I strongly urge those who do attend to receive the Eucharist in the hand so as not to breath on the hand of the one distributing the Eucharist. Again, love of neighbor is the best way to show love of God. Please bring your own cleaning wipes to clean the pew area where you and your family will sit and kneel—the parish may not have time to do a thorough cleaning between Masses.

“The liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; it is also the font from which all her power flows” (SC 10). While we have for a time abstained from intimate participation in the liturgical life of the Church for the sake of the common good, we know that “in biological life, as in spiritual life, fasting presumes that eating is the normal thing to do.”<sup>1</sup> And so the following plan is set forth to place the Church in Lansing on a path toward the restoration of our common life in the liturgy, the ordinary means by “which Christ manifests, makes present, and communicates his work of salvation” (CCC 1076).

### **Dispensation from the Sunday Obligation:**

The dispensation from the Sunday obligation will continue through July 31, 2020. Parishes should plan to livestream Masses even after this date for those who cannot attend for serious health concerns.

Although the faithful are dispensed from their Sunday obligation to attend Mass, they must observe the Lord’s Day and are encouraged to spend time in prayer on Sunday, meditating on the Lord’s passion, death, and resurrection (an excellent way to do this is through participating in a broadcast of the Sunday Mass) or participating in a spiritual or corporal act of mercy.

### **Easter Obligation**

Many have inquired regarding how this will impact the “Easter duty” of Catholics to “receive the sacrament of the Eucharist at least during the Easter season” and the obligation to “confess your sins at least once a year” (CCC 2042). While the basic requirement of the Church is for all Catholics to “confess...grave sins at least once a year” (CIC 989), this should take place whenever necessary. And, while the “Easter duty” of receiving the Holy Eucharist should be done during the Easter season, the Code of Canon Law specifies that “for a just cause” this obligation can be fulfilled “at another time during the year” (CIC 920, §2). Protecting the health and well-being of the most vulnerable in a time of global pandemic is certainly such a just cause.

### **Pastoral Discretion**

All prudence is to be observed in the parish’s circumstances to safeguard the health of every participant, including the pastor’s own health, and to observe all civil regulations so as to further the common good. Clergy who are among the vulnerable population should consider whether it is reasonable for them to celebrate Masses publicly during these times and how that should be done. These guidelines are not to be considered as mandates. Should a pastor determine that his parish should not open for public liturgies for any reason (including, of course, his own age or underlying health conditions), that is always his prerogative. His parishioners should be patient and understanding of such a decision. I will not counter that decision. In addition, should any parish employees, who normally would assist with liturgies, deem it imprudent for them to participate, they should be excused by their pastor.

The following are recommendations. It is up to pastors to decide how they are to be implemented in their parishes.

## **First Steps to Restore Full Participation in the Sacramental Life**

These recommendations will take full effect on June 1st and continue until such time as public health and safety permit greater liberty

### Restroom Use:

Restroom use should be discouraged and social distancing maintained.

### Participants

- Attendance should not exceed 25% of each parish's seating capacity.
- Proper social distancing should be maintained between separate households.
- Those who are vulnerable to the coronavirus because of age or other health issues should be told not to attend public Masses. Please refer to this [list of vulnerable populations](#) from the CDC.
- Parents are encouraged to leave small children at home, if feasible.
  - Often, children who are not yet eligible to receive Communion lack the ability to follow hygienic and distancing guidelines that protect themselves and others.
- Nursing infants are welcome.

All those in attendance **MUST** wear face masks. Even if you do not feel a need to do so, others will be made to feel much more comfortable if you do and we all want to have care for one another.

### Singing & Responding

There is to be no congregational singing. In addition, spoken responses should not be vigorously vocalized, but expressed in a soft voice. Singing and vigorous speech increases the risk of viral spread through the aerosolization of droplets, which are only filtered by N95-grade masks. Since singing is integral to the liturgy, it seems best to have a single cantor sing the proper Mass texts (with the assistance of amplification) in order to reduce the amount of singing. The faithful should be encouraged to participate by silently uniting their minds and hearts to the words being sung (cf. *Musicam Sacram*, 15) and making the responses in a soft voice.

### Distribution of Holy Communion

- The faithful are encouraged to sanitize their hands with hand sanitizer as the minister of Holy Communion is washing his hands.
- Holy Communion may not be distributed with gloves, nor may it be received in the hand if someone is wearing a glove.
- The faithful desiring to receive Holy Communion on the tongue or in the hand should wait to remove their face coverings until just before the reception of Holy Communion.
- An usher dismisses each household for Holy Communion (one household at a time). Do not rush this. Take it slow. If there is more than one household waiting to receive Holy Communion, ensure that a two-pew distance is maintained between households.

### Personal Precautions

- Parishioners should bring their own face coverings and should wear them.
- The celebrant need not wear a mask but should when distributing Holy Communion. The lector need not wear a mask when proclaiming the readings.
- People who feel sick or have any symptoms of sickness (fever, cough, etc.) should not attend.
- People should bring their own sanitizing wipes to sanitize the area where they will sit and kneel. They should not rely solely upon the parish staff cleaning the entire church between Masses.

### Private Prayer in Churches:

Churches should remain open for the faithful to pray. The church doors will be open Monday through Friday from 2:30 p.m. until 3:30 p.m. The faithful attending to pray should be encouraged to sanitize their space before and after prayer. For up-to-date information about the Diocese of Lansing's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, please visit [www.dioceseoflansing.org/coronavirus](http://www.dioceseoflansing.org/coronavirus). Please continue to share this website with your parish communities.