



DIOCESE OF VICTORIA

Office of the Bishop

Beginning May 1:

- Churches may begin to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation at regularly scheduled times. If necessary, a pastor may add extra scheduled times. A pastor may use an outdoor space for the celebration of the Sacrament. During these times, pastors should arrange in such a way to be certain:
 - there is good air-flow/ventilation where the Sacrament is celebrated;
 - there is proper social distancing for those in line to receive the Sacrament;
 - everyone sanitizes hands and wears a mask;
 - there is a screen between the penitent and priest.
- Parishes can return to celebrating Mass with a Congregation. We need to be careful to follow the safety guidelines proposed by our local officials. Here are some things to consider:
 - People over the age of 65 should be encouraged to continue participating from home.
 - People with a heart condition or diabetes, who are overweight or have other underlying at-risk conditions, should be encouraged to continue participating from home.
 - Dispensation from Sunday obligation to attend in person is extended through May, especially with respect to people who may be considered physically well to attend, yet believe it best to stay at home.
 - Parishioners should take their temperatures before coming to Mass and should not attend if exhibiting any signs of sickness.
 - Those unable to attend the Mass could make an appointment with their pastor to receive communion at the church office during the week.
 - Concerning the celebration of Sunday Mass, consider the following:
 - An outdoor Mass may be permissible, if a pastor thinks it is safer and possible to celebrate reverently.
 - Extra Masses could be celebrated on Saturday afternoons and Sundays, to accommodate social distancing guidelines.
 - Weddings and Funerals are permitted, utilizing size consideration and social distancing protocols.

- In order to accommodate social distancing protocols, pastors are to allow in their churches no more than 25% of the mandated fire code seating capacity of the building.
- Depending on the layout of the particular church, parishioners are to be seated in every other or every third pew.
- Those of the same household can be seated together in a pew.
- An usher or team of ushers should be trained to make sure the church doesn't exceed attendance limitations and people follow social distancing protocols.
- Ushers/greeters are encouraged to wear gloves and masks, and to open and close doors for parishioners upon their arrival and departure.
- The Holy Water fonts should be empty; the presider may use the Sprinkling Rite and speak about the connection to Baptism.
- Parishioners should be careful not to gather too closely when entering or leaving the church, or stand too close in the communion line.
- Hand sanitizer should be available and easily visible at the church entrance.
- Priests, ushers and parishioners should wear masks.
- Pews should be sanitized thoroughly between Masses, including under the seats.
- Bathrooms should be sanitized thoroughly between Masses.
- Missalettes and hymnals should be removed from the pews and not utilized during sacramental and liturgical celebrations.
- Liturgical ministries should be limited in number – possibly celebrating Masses with no altar servers and only one lector.
- Choir members should practice proper social distancing.
- Collection should be done in such a way that no one is required to touch the basket, for example have the basket at church entrance and ask people to make contributions when entering or exiting.
- The offertory procession should be discontinued.
- Hosts could be distributed in the ciboria before the Eucharistic Prayer so priest breathes only on host that he will consume.
- Liturgically, the Sign of Peace and distribution of the Precious Blood should be suspended.
- Clergy should not share from the same chalice.
- Priests and Eucharistic Ministers should wear masks during distribution of communion.
- The distribution of Communion is an especially sensitive time. The person receiving communion should be encouraged to receive in the

hand. When communion has concluded the presiding priest should combine the consecrated hosts at the Tabernacle.

- Pastors can celebrate the Sacraments of Initiation for the Catechumens and Candidates at a time when it seems possible to do so safely and with reverence.
- Bishops Cahill and Fellhauer have postponed Confirmations through May 18. We will need to consider what to do for re-scheduling.
- Parish meetings and gatherings of a smaller size on parish grounds may be resumed, while utilizing established protocols for social distancing and other safety measures.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brendan Cahill". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross at the beginning.

Most Reverend Brendan J. Cahill
Bishop of Victoria in Texas

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