



May 29, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

It is with great joy that I would like to announce that our parishes will be able to resume public worship inside our church buildings beginning the weekend of the **Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ** (June 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>). In those parishes that are ready to follow our established norms, the celebration of weekday Masses, Funeral Masses and Nuptial Weddings within our Churches may also resume after this weekend.

As you know, we began the outdoor celebration of public Mass in the diocese on May 21, the Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord. I am pleased to report that this first phase of re-opening has gone very well with a growing number of parishes now offering outside Mass both seated and in parking lots.

These Masses have been offered in a manner that health officials consider the safest ways in which to congregate by practicing social distancing, and the same policies will be in effect as we begin to celebrate Mass within our Churches buildings. While the challenges are considerable when congregating in an indoor location, we are confident that by following public health recommendations, we can come together for Mass in a manner that is as safe or safer than in other public gatherings.

I recognize that the last few months have been a most difficult time for all of us. I am grateful for your patience and prayers during this unprecedented moment in our history. I very much appreciate the great sorrow and loss felt by many who have longed to return to Mass. We will also need to live with continuing uncertainties about the course of the pandemic and its full impact on our society. However, I believe that it is also the right time to move forward in hope and faith, while taking all necessary precautions and safeguards to protect life in our community as we resume public worship within our Churches.

In order to do so, we will observe a few fundamental principles. First, I will continue the dispensation of the obligation to attend Sunday Mass for all those who are vulnerable or concerned about their health or the health of loved ones. For this reason, I encourage all parishes to continue to live stream the celebration of Mass, while public worship slowly resumes. In addition, for those who choose to come to Mass in our Church buildings, we will maintain strict social distancing of at least six feet, frequent sanitization of common

areas, the use of hand sanitizers and face masks for all in attendance, and the continuation of many of the previously published liturgical norms issued for the celebration of outdoor Masses.

One issue of supreme importance is the permissible seating capacity of every Church building. Each Church's seating capacity must be determined by following strict social distancing requirements. This means that the seating capacity in every Church will vary depending upon its size and configuration. To do otherwise would be to potentially put one's neighbor into harm's way- a danger that we must avoid in order to remain faithful to our fundamental Catholic belief in the sanctity of every human life.

A complete list of the extensive guidelines recommended to pastors and parishes regarding this next phase of planning will be posted on our diocesan website at: [www.bridgeportdiocese.org](http://www.bridgeportdiocese.org) on Monday, June 1, 2020.

In order to accommodate as many parishioners as possible to the celebration of Sunday Mass, parishes will also be permitted to continue to offer Masses outdoors and simulcast a Mass that is celebrated in the Church to other locations (either indoor or outdoor), provided that all appropriate guidelines are adhered to in these auxiliary locations.

As we take this next step with great anticipation, let us remember that our common sacrifice has had one prime motive: to follow the mandate of the Lord of Life to protect, defend, and keep safe every human life. We best honor that commitment to life and those who have lost their lives in the pandemic by ensuring the safety of our neighbors.

To be certain we face many challenges as a Church and a society in the coming months, but as we gather around the Lord's table together, we can take assurance that the Eucharist will sustain us.

I pray that the Lord Jesus will bless you and your families and that even in the midst of this crisis you find time to enjoy the summer.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Most Reverend Frank J. Caggiano  
Bishop of Bridgeport