



Dear Parishioners,

Below is an article recently written by Dave Guthro, the Director of Communications for the Diocese of Portland. It addresses some of the issues involved in restarting Mass attendance in our diocese. If you have any questions, please let me know.

Unless the governor changes the outlook, we plan to move forward with a limited return to Masses beginning in St. Peter the Fisherman Parish on June 3, 2020. I will send more detailed information as we get closer to the end of the month.

God bless you, and thank you for your prayers,
Fr. Philip



As Catholics across Maine tuned into live-streamed Masses this weekend, it marked eight weeks since the doors of Maine churches had been closed due to restrictions and safety guidelines stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic.

On Sunday, as Bishop Robert Deeley celebrated his weekly Sunday Mass in Portland for thousands of faithful participating from home, a light at the end of the tunnel could be seen.

“During this week, we have been planning for the next step in our openings here in the diocese,” said the bishop as he delivered his homily in the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, which has remained empty since March 18. “When gatherings of 50 or more people are possible, we will be able to begin to open churches and celebrate Mass.”

According to the tentative timeline offered by Governor Mills’ administration, the opening of churches could come as soon as early June.

“As we do this planning, however, I think it important to be clear that opening will bring us into a situation very different from when we closed some two months ago,” said Bishop Deeley. “Our numbers will be limited at each Mass. We do not have a cure for this illness. As such, we have an obligation to care for each other.”

Part of that care will be continued adherence to social distancing, including wearing masks during the Mass and other considerations.

“Some of us will have to decide that it is best for our health not to attend at all but to continue to participate in this virtual way,” said the bishop. “For this reason, I am continuing the dispensation from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass for the time being. It may also be the case that some of you may find it more convenient to attend a daily Mass during the week rather than on Sunday when there could be less people present. I will also encourage our pastors to continue these virtual Masses since, in any case, everyone will not be able to attend each week

because there simply will not be the capacity in our churches.”

The bishop encouraged the faithful to carefully consider when and how it makes the most sense, for their own safety and for the safety of those around them, to return to the pews.

“We want to make the sacraments available, but we know that those sacraments, gifts of grace from God’s love for us, form us into a people who seek to bring God’s love into the world. The world starts for us with the people who attend Mass with us,” said the bishop. “We need to care for each other and do things in a way that protects us from illness, very aware that this virus has no cure, and can be fatal. In thinking about that, make sure you include the health of your priest in your consideration. Many of them, by age or health condition, are also vulnerable to the worst of this illness so we have to care for them as well.”

The bishop noted that Scripture, as it always does, provided a guide on Sunday, in that all of the faithful share a common need to work together to bring the Gospel to life, reflecting in our lives the meaning we have found in Jesus.

“All of us are called to serve one another. The Spirit of Jesus brings us beyond our own attachment to self and gathers us into a community which is the Church and asks us to care for each other and those we encounter in our world. We bring Jesus to others living his way which is the way of love.”

In the time of the COVID-19 pandemic, that care includes tangible aid for those suffering from financial hardship.

“This is not just a health crisis. It is also an economic one. The jobless rate is huge. Helping as we can is our mission,” said the bishop. “I am touched to hear of the many acts of kindness being organized by people in this time. Some are contributing from their stimulus check, food pantries and soup kitchens abound in the diocese, and Catholic Charities Maine helps to supply 24 of them in the north of the diocese. These are the ways in which we,

together, live the mission of the Lord Jesus. It is not something of the past. It is alive.”

Sunday is also Mother’s Day, which honors the selfless women in our lives, a particularly appropriate act this year.

“I marvel at the extraordinary effort that mothers have had to make in this time of our COVID-19 crisis,” said Bishop Deeley. “They have become 24/7 caregivers, teachers, organizers, administrators, and chefs of family and home. I was on one of our many virtual meeting calls recently and looking for a member of my staff. She was in another room at her home making sure her young daughter had connected with her Zoom class. Such is the balancing act of our mothers. So, make sure you let them know how much they are appreciated today. Make sure you pray for her today. Thank God for the blessing she has been to your life. And, if it is the case, as it is for many of us, that mother has died, remember her this morning in this Mass, grateful for her love for you. She gave you life. She formed you and nurtured you in faith with love. Say a prayer for her and give thanks for the generosity of her life.”

To view Bishop Deeley’s full Mother’s Day message, visit www.portlanddiocese.org/content/mother%E2%80%99s-day-weekend-message-bishop-robert-deeley.

The Diocese of Portland is offering updates multiple times per day on its Coronavirus Response page (www.portlanddiocese.org/response-coronavirus).

Offerings include:

- Daily updates and opportunities from the diocese and Maine parishes
- Live-streamed and parking lot Mass schedules for Maine parishes
- Ways to participate in Mass from home on television and radio
- Drive-thru confession schedules for Maine parishes
- Parking lot and live-streamed adoration schedules for Maine parishes
- Conversations with priests

- Holy Hour schedules
 - Recitations of the rosary
 - Special presentations
 - Prayer and faith resources to assist you in your spiritual growth
 - Ways to receive assistance from Maine parishes and the State of Maine
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