



To: Parish Reopening Co-Leadership Teams

From: Vicar General

CC: Bishops of Illinois

RE: Phase 2 Reopening Timeline and Requirements

Date: May 31, 2020

Pastors/Administrators, please forward this email in its entirety to all members of your Parish Reopening Co-Leadership Team and volunteer captains.

Upon review of the recent guidance issued by Governor Pritzker for the reopening of churches, the bishops of the Chicago Province are moving forward with the Church's Phase 2 of the reopening plan, which allows for the resumption of modified public Masses and increased attendance for baptism, weddings, funerals, private prayer and Eucharistic adoration. (Please see final section of this communication for information on other celebrations.)

The cardinal has accepted the recommendation of the Task Force that the resumption of public Masses in the Archdiocese of Chicago may begin with Sunday Masses June 6–7 and daily Masses beginning June 8 under the following stipulations:

- Parishioners are to be informed that the dispensation from Sunday Mass and Holy Days of Obligation continues.
- We still advise that the elderly and those with underlying medical conditions stay at home and participate through livestreamed and televised Masses.
- Pastors are encouraged to continue livestreaming parish liturgies as a way of serving those who cannot attend Masses in person. Livestreaming is also a good practice to strengthen the sense of community for the entire parish community.
- Each parish must be certified for Phase 2 (certification form attached and posted to [archchicago.org/coronavirus/reopening-training](https://www.archchicago.org/coronavirus/reopening-training)). As a reminder, to be certified for Phase 2 a parish must already be certified for Phase 1/1A, it must have celebrated/hosted three Phase 1/1A gatherings and it must have a reservation/registration system in place to effectively manage attendance. Please see the Phase 2 certification form for full details.
- The limit on attendees in the archdiocese per Mass and all other liturgical celebrations is between 15 and 20 percent of your total church seating capacity (at the discretion of the parish leadership team) while maintaining proper social distancing (see Phase 2 certification form for calculating social distancing capacity).
- However, it is strongly advised that for the first weekend of Phase 2 parishes begin with a 15 percent limit or no more than 50 attendees (whichever is less) at each Mass or liturgy. This recommendation is made so that your reopening team and volunteers can gain critical experience in managing and keeping safe larger numbers of people, as well as accomplishing cleaning and disinfecting between services. This further gives practice at managing the flow of parishioners coming and going between Masses while observing social distancing.



- Per the Phase 2 certification requirements, parishes will need to use a reservation/registration system to ensure proper management of parishioner attendance; this will benefit both parishioners as an assurance of their ability to participate, as well as volunteers and their ability to anticipate attendance. Importantly, per guidelines from the Illinois Department of Public Health, parishes will need to retain parishioner attendance records (including name, date and time of attendance) for the purposes of contact tracing if and when a confirmed case of COVID-19 is identified. Those records will need to be stored securely and **must be deleted 14 days after each liturgical celebration** on a rolling basis if not requested by health officials. This is to protect the privacy of all people.
- Seated, outdoor Masses are not permissible at this time for several reasons:
 - First, as evidenced elsewhere in states and cities that recently reopened, the general public has not yet grown accustomed to maintaining necessary social distance and safety measures. We must allow time for our own parishioners to adjust to social distancing and safety requirements as our state progresses along the governor's Restore Illinois plan.
 - Second, our parish reopening volunteers are tasked with learning repeatable procedures for maintaining order, guiding parishioners through a controlled environment and disinfecting particular areas of the church. For the sake of maintaining quality, consistent execution of those critical efforts, celebrating Masses inside our churches remains the preferred option for now.
- While the norm for celebration of Mass is and will remain in the church building, in-car Masses in parking lots will be permissible in Phase 2 primarily for the benefit of parishioners in vulnerable populations who may not otherwise be able to enter the church building. This exception is offered as an additional option for those parishes that are able to meet specific criteria that will be published this week, but such parishes must offer Masses in church as the norm. It is not recommended that in-car Masses be offered during the first week of opening for Phase 2.

Confirmations, First Communions, Adult Baptisms and Other Celebrations

We recognize the desire to know the specific guidelines for other sacraments and celebrations such as quinceañeras, which will be permitted in Phase 2. These will be forthcoming. Right now, our focus is on resuming the celebration of Masses.

Additional information and guidance will be issued in the coming days to help you prepare for Phase 2. Many of the general guidelines will be the same as Phase 1 and 1A for things such as cleaning and disinfecting, hand sanitizing, required face coverings, etc. Customizable template communications and videos that you can share with your parishioners will be sent to you this week as well. In the meantime, please continue to send your questions to reopenaoc@archchicago.org.

As we proceed with our church reopening plan, we must also recognize the deep hurt and anger that is being expressed in demonstrations currently taking place in our streets and those around the country. As Cardinal Cupich recently noted, we are long overdue in this country for a national reconciliation to address the evils of racism, hatred and indifference that have afflicted our people since the first slave ships docked on this continent. As many Catholics prepare to re-emerge from our homes to gather around the Eucharistic table of our Lord, let us do so with a renewed conviction to gather together, as one people, united in love for our neighbor.

Thank you for all you are doing to bring the life and love of Jesus Christ to His people. As we celebrate this Pentecost, may the Holy Spirit fill your hearts and kindle within you the fire of God's love in manifest ways.

Peace,

Bishop Ron Hicks