



Office of the Bishop

Roman Catholic Diocese of Lubbock

May 20, 2020

My Dear People, Church of the Diocese of Lubbock:

As expected, this has been a busy week as the Governor has provided new guidance for the next phase of reopening the state. Now we as Church on the South Plains need to respond appropriately, and safely.

I want to thank all of you for your patience and good nature as together we have struggled to unselfishly observe strict orders and protocols on behalf of the safety of others and ourselves. I have really felt your support and prayers as your Bishop during this time, and I really appreciate that – it has not been an easy time for any of us!

I want to take this opportunity to commend my priests for their eagerness to serve you, for their creativity in trying to do the best they can on your behalf, and for their collaboration and support. Their collaboration has contributed significantly to the measures I am announcing at this time.

It is important for us to realize that no two parishes in our diocese are alike. The variety of venues and populations and cultures makes it impossible for every parish to follow identical policies and procedures. Your Pastors know you, your needs, your civic reality, and so I am going to be relying upon them to do what is best for you.

I need to ask you to trust your Pastor and to carefully follow his instructions, for he has at heart your best interests and those of your neighbors and has to execute difficult decisions on your behalf. Please refrain from pressuring your pastor because of what a neighboring parish or parishes of your friends and family members might be doing, which could be different from what your parish is doing.

Every parish is facing different realities on the basis of which your Pastor must make his decisions. I have assured the Pastors that they have my support whatever their decisions might be; and I have offered to be of help to them as they make their difficult decisions.

I still fear efforts at reopening our society are moving too quickly. I continue to believe that the best way to deal with the Coronavirus is to stay home, avoid gatherings as much as possible, keep at least six feet apart from others, and to wear masks. Of course, we need to wash and disinfect our hands!

But in light of the Governor's reopening plan, after consultation with the Presbyteral Council, I am making two announcements today.

First, we plan to make weekend Masses possible with a congregation beginning next weekend, May 30/31, Pentecost Weekend. Space in our churches will be limited. Our parishes are encountering difficulty sourcing disinfectant products.

I am encouraging parishes to continue offering Masses via livestream and outside, and to keep distributing Communion after Mass outside as they have been doing the past few weeks. Not all of our churches will be able to open due to space and safety constraints.

Please respect the decision of your Pastor, as he has been in consultation with parish leadership prior to making his tough decisions. But we are increasing our ability to make the Sacraments for which we all long more available to you.

The second announcement is that weekday Masses with a congregation may begin tomorrow, Thursday, May 21, in those parishes that are prepared,— I alerted the priests to that possibility last weekend. Of course, distancing and disinfecting protocols must be followed and those will dictate capacity, frequency, and conduct of those weekday Masses.

I want to issue this invitation to unselfishness – if you are able to attend a weekday Mass, please consider NOT attending a weekend Mass at church in order to make space for those unable to attend Mass on weekdays.

The obligation to attend Mass continues to be dispensed indefinitely in the Diocese of Lubbock.

Once again, I ask you to be patient with and kind towards your Pastor as he establishes processes and procedures in your specific parish.

I beg you to be circumspect and rational as we begin to gather once again as a society. If you are sick or vulnerable, please stay home – do not come to church. Continue to practice extraordinary hygiene. Keep your distance from one another.

There continues to be no Sign of Peace exchanged at Mass; Communion from the cup continues to be withheld, and I beg you to receive Communion in the hand for sanitary reasons.

We are now in the days of the Easter Season which are preparatory for the celebration of Pentecost – a Feast which I think deserves extra fervent celebration this year.

Between now and Pentecost Sunday I invite you to pray specifically for the coming of the Holy Spirit upon a world, society, and our local communities of faith which so need the grace bestowed by the Spirit:

**Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful,
and enkindle in them the fire of your love.
Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created.
And you shall renew the face of the earth.**

Let us pray.

**O God, who has taught the hearts of the faithful by the
light of the Holy Spirit, grant that by the gift of the
same Spirit we may be always truly wise and ever
rejoice in his consolation.**

Amen.



Most Rev. Robert M. Coerver
Bishop of Lubbock

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