

DECREE ESTABLISHING LITURGICAL NORMS
DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

In light of the current COVID-19 pandemic present in the Diocese of Manchester, on March 17, 2020, I issued a notice suspending the public celebration of Mass in the Diocese. As of May 18, 2020, over 3,600 New Hampshire citizens have tested positive for COVID-19, and 172 of our neighbors have lost their lives in the very short time since we first learned of this virus.

Mindful that the dignity of the human person requires the pursuit of the common good (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* §1926) and as Bishop of the Diocese of Manchester, understanding my responsibility to issue liturgical norms by which all are bound (canon 838 § 4), I hereby decree the following:

The public celebration of Mass remains suspended.

No later than Pentecost (Sunday, May 31, 2020), each pastor shall make arrangements for the distribution of Holy Communion outside of Mass in accordance with the current directives issued by me to preserve the sacredness and reverence of receipt of the Sacrament while promoting the health and safety of the Faithful.

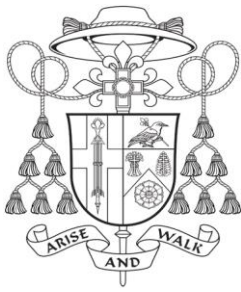
Holy Communion may be distributed by a priest, deacon, or an extraordinary minister so long as the person distributing Holy Communion has not been affected by nor is symptomatic of COVID-19. Receipt of Holy Communion may be standing or kneeling, on the tongue or in the hand, at the choice of the individual person (*General Instruction of the Roman Missal* § 160). Because the distribution of Holy Communion takes place outside of Mass and it is forbidden to reserve the Precious Blood at any time, the Precious Blood is not to be distributed.

These shall be the liturgical norms to which all clergy and Faithful shall be bound until such time as I deem it to be prudent to modify them.

Given at the Chancery on this 19th day of May, 2020.

Most Reverend Peter A. Libasci, D.D.
Bishop of Manchester

Meredith P. Cook
Chancellor



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP
DIOCESE OF MANCHESTER

May 19, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I am so deeply grateful for your patience and for fervently practicing our shared faith in your homes during this time of isolation. I have also been very grateful for your prayers for our Church and have been fortified by witnessing all the broadcast Masses, pastor video messages, live online rosaries, and all our modified ways of sharing in our faith together.

I write to you today to share the news that I have given permission for our pastors and parishes to begin **distribution of Holy Communion to the faithful**. For some time now, I have been working with our regional Deans and others on the development of plans for the resumption of the public celebration of Mass, and this interim measure, which has been generated from that process, is intended to allow for the reception of the Eucharist pending the resumption of public Masses.

Under this interim plan, priests will be using strict safety precautions and will be provided guidance regarding timing, entry and exit procedures, and training of volunteers. Any parish that is able to comply with the guidelines may begin distributing Holy Communion as early as this weekend (May 23/24); however, I have instructed that all parishes must implement this plan no later than May 30/31. Please check with your local parish to find out when and how they will be putting this plan into place.

We are continuing to work on the resumption of the celebration of public Mass. One of the items that we are addressing is the State of New Hampshire's current restriction on gatherings of 10 or more people. Although this restriction has begun to be relaxed in certain contexts, the State (as of the time of writing) has not yet done so with respect to gatherings for worship. For the last several weeks, we have been participating in a working group that is developing a careful process for how places of worship will be able to responsibly resume gatherings of more than 10 people. Governor Sununu is awaiting the recommendations that this group even now is finalizing.

Even though we cannot return fully to public celebration of the Mass immediately, I am very hopeful that we will have public liturgies available soon—even if they will inevitably come with modifications. In the meantime, priests continue to celebrate Holy Mass privately, and to offer the Sacrament of Reconciliation to individuals. Churches continue to remain open for private individual prayer at designated times as previously directed. My dispensation from the obligation to attend Holy Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation remains in effect.

I am grateful to all of you who have endured this sacrifice for your brothers and sisters with such a strong sense of our oneness in the Lord. Let us all pray for one another and look forward to the day of our great reunion.

Sincerely in Christ,

Most Reverend Peter A. Libasci
Bishop of Manchester