

# CATHOLIC CONFERENCE OF OHIO

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May 8, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As the “Responsible Restart Ohio Plan” is implemented during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, allowing a gradual return to work and lifting of some of the restrictions regarding consumer, retail and services, returning to operation, we your bishops, together with you, are anxious for the safe return to the public celebration of Mass/Liturgy. While making every effort to respect the spirit of the governor’s instructions, we want to begin in some way to make the public celebration of Mass/Liturgy available. To that end, we inform you that the bishops of Ohio have agreed that each diocese will determine a soft opening date later in May granting permission for the public celebration of weekday Mass/Liturgy, where it can be achieved safely and where pastorally possible, with less than 50 percent occupancy of the Church building, respecting social distancing. This plan provides for the possibility of the gradual return to the public celebration of Mass/Liturgy and prepares us for the Solemnity of Pentecost on the weekend of 30/31 May, when Sunday Mass/Liturgy will be publicly celebrated.

During the next few weeks, we will be working with our pastors and diocesan pastoral staffs to prepare for a soft opening of public celebration of weekday Mass/Liturgy. To this end, we ask our pastors with their parish staffs to prepare to implement a rigorous effort to fulfill guidelines, which will be forthcoming from each Diocese/Eparchy, to include maintaining social distancing, recommendations to provide a safe environment, and instructions for the distribution of Holy Communion.

The dispensation from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass/Liturgy remains in effect. As your bishops, we continue to be cautious and concerned for those who are most at risk, the elderly and those with serious health issues. We also remain deeply concerned for our priests, many of whom we find in this category. We strongly urge those who are most vulnerable and their caregivers to stay at home, and we implore those who are not feeling well, or who fear that their own health or that of their family may be compromised, to refrain from coming to church at this time. We thank you for your patience, understanding, and cooperation as we implement this gradual return to the public celebration of Mass/Liturgy.

Together, we continue to pray for all who are suffering from Covid-19, for all health care workers and first responders, for all the deceased and their families, and for an easing of the anxiety and tension caused by this pandemic. Relying on the Motherly care of Our Lady, Health of the Sick, we unite our sufferings to those of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and we trust in the glorious hope of His Resurrection.

Most Rev. Dennis M. Schnurr  
Archbishop of Cincinnati

Rev. Donald P. Oleksiak  
Diocesan Administrator of Cleveland

Most Rev. Daniel E. Thomas  
Bishop of Toledo

Most Rev. J. Michael Botean  
Romanian Eparchy of Canton

Most Rev. George V. Murry, S.J.  
Bishop of Youngstown

Most Rev. Bohdan J. Danylo  
Ukrainian Eparchy of St. Josaphat

Most Rev. Jeffrey M. Monforton  
Bishop of Steubenville

Most Rev. Milan Lach, SJ  
Byzantine Eparchy of Parma

Most Rev. Robert J. Brennan  
Bishop of Columbus

