



**DIOCESE OF BAKER**

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**DECREE**  
**OPENING PARISH CHURCHES**  
**TO THE CELEBRATION OF PUBLIC MASS**

Update of Decrees of 19 March 2020 and 7 April 2020  
On Measures in Response to the COVID-19 Threat

Whereas Governor Kate Brown has set in motion a phased-in loosening of social gathering restrictions put in place to stop the spread of the coronavirus;

Whereas County Commissioners throughout Oregon are currently proposing detailed revisions to those directives;

This is an appropriate time to begin the re-opening of Catholic worship, with diligent precaution for the danger the virus poses to those most vulnerable to infection.

Therefore, in virtue of my duty to direct, promote, and guard the liturgical life of the Diocese of Baker, I hereby revoke the 19 March and 7 April cancellations of all public Masses within the territory of the Diocese, and I decree that priests are free to commence public celebration of the Eucharist in their churches on Monday, 11 May 2020.

I further decree that a basic component of the March and April decrees remains in effect: “all the faithful of the Diocese of Baker and others actually present in the Diocese are dispensed from the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and other holy days of obligation” (c. 1247). Those whom space does not allow to go to Sunday Mass must keep the spirit of the Lord’s Day by refraining from work and devoting time to prayer. They would do well to watch a livestreamed Mass and make a spiritual communion. They should also take advantage of the opportunity to reserve a place at Mass during the week.

I hereby encourage yet again all vulnerable, at-risk, and seriously worried people to stay home and not expose themselves to the danger of infection. Anyone with the slightest symptoms or feelings of sickness *must* stay home so as not to infect others.

When Masses resume, priests must take care to observe the “COVID-19 Guidance for Faith Communities” issued by the Oregon Health Authority 9 April 2020, which specifically allows religious services for no more than 25 people with strict social distancing. A parish that is unable to maintain strict social distancing cannot open Masses to the public until it is able to do so.

A document of mine sent to the priests on 30 April 2020 (“Re-opening of Masses to the Public”) contains practical instructions to insure congregational safety and distribute Mass attendance evenly throughout the week. Two of these are worthy of note here: the wearing of face masks at Mass is strongly encouraged, and members of a single household may sit together without observing social distancing with one another.

I order that this decree and dispensation be made known to all concerned, especially pastors and administrators.

This decree takes effect immediately.

Given at the Pastoral Center of the Diocese of Baker this 7<sup>th</sup> day of May 2020, everything to the contrary notwithstanding.



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Most Reverend Liam Cary  
Bishop of Baker

(Seal)



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Very Reverend Richard O. Fischer  
Vicar General