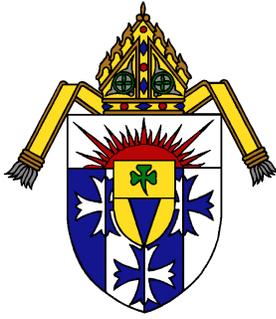


Diocese of Great Falls-Billings

Founded 1904



Memo

To: All Priests and Deacons
Fr: Bishop Warfel +BMW
Re: Reopening of parishes for public worship

With the announcement from Governor Bullock for a phased reopening which allows for a return to public worship, the following directions are made in consultation with the Priests' Council of the Diocese of Great Falls-Billing. They are effective immediately:

The obligation to attend Sunday Mass and Holy Days continue to be suspended.

As far as possible, depending on the capability of a parish, live-stream Masses should continue for the benefit of parishioners who will remain at home.

Parish Masses may resume, with reduced capacity, on Sunday, April 26 (not Saturday night, April 25). The following restrictions must be in place before public Mass is allowed. This includes any local governmental determinations. Given that these requirements are met, the determination when to allow for resuming public Masses rest with the pastor.

- Social distancing of 6 feet must be maintained and managed with the assistance of hospitality ministers:
 - When entering and leaving the church
 - With seating — between non-family members
 - During the Communion procession
 - Provisions need to be made in advance to ensure social distancing at all times; ropes, ribbon, tape etc. should be used.
- The invitation to the Sign of Peace is to be omitted, and no sign of peace offered.
- There is not to be a procession of the offertory gifts of bread and wine. They will be brought forward from a credence table in the sanctuary.
- Priests may wish to remind the faithful that they are not required to receive Communion. They may make a spiritual Communion.
- According to CDC guidelines, distribution of Holy Communion is to be offered in the hand only, with just care and reverence and in all charity for those susceptible to

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becoming infected. This includes concern for a number of priests in the Diocese who are vulnerable individuals.

- Tongs or other tools are not to be used for the distribution of Communion.
- Communion under the Precious Blood is not to be offered until further notice.
- In the Communion line, people are to come up in single file line, maintaining a distance of six feet from the person in front of them.
- Baskets are not to be passed for the collection. They should be located in an accessible and suitable location.
- No social gatherings may take place before or after Mass, e.g., coffee and donuts.
- Ensure proper cleaning of frequently touched surfaces in the church, following CDC guidelines, and if possible, provide hand sanitizer at the church entrance.
- Remove holy water from the holy water fonts.
- Because of the difficulty in sanitizing hymnals and missalettes, disposable liturgical aids are recommended. If needed, musicians may utilize well known and familiar music that may be sung from memory.
- Provisions are to be made for cleaning and sanitizing the church following Masses, including restrooms.

In order to provide an additional opportunity to attend Mass and to receive the Eucharist, attendance at weekday Masses may be encouraged in place of attendance on Sunday.

For a situation in which a priest is particularly vulnerable, he may choose to celebrate Mass but allow others to distribute Communion and, in some cases, may decide he needs to celebrate Mass separately and allow a deacon or trained lay minister to lead a Word and Communion Service. (This is a temporary solution.)

If adequate spacing and social distancing and cleaning CANNOT be managed, or a parish cannot accomplish all of the requirements, the parish may have a parish Mass, but with no more than 10 participants.

Communion to the Homebound has inherent risks to vulnerable individuals, so caution should be considered if a parishioner requests Communion at their home. Parish priests and lay staff should continue regular and personal contact, by phone, Facetime or other electronic communication, to those who are homebound. This also includes those in nursing facilities and assisted care living situations.

Churches are generally to remain open for parishioners to pray. Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament is encouraged. Ideally, parishes should provide time and opportunity for Eucharistic Exposition and Benediction; social distancing must be managed and maintained. Exposition is not allowed unless someone is present.

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In a previous memo, I provided directions for completion of the sacraments of initiation for both candidates for Confirmation and first Communion and adults to be baptized and or received into full communion. All priests who are pastors and parish administrators are provided the faculty to confirm for this calendar year.

Public celebrations of the Sacraments are permitted as long as adequate spacing and social distancing are managed and maintained:

- Baptism of infants may be celebrated while keeping in mind the need for spacing. Participation is limited to immediate family and godparents. New water is to be used and blessed for each baptism.
- Confirmation with first Communion celebrations are to be scheduled according to the pastor's determination. The same requirements for spacing and hygiene must be adhered to.
- Weddings may be celebrated with the limitations stated above.
- Opportunity for Reconciliation should be maintained while assuring proper spacing but also confidentiality.
- Funerals may be celebrated with the limitations stated above. Local funeral homes and local governments may have specific requirements.
- Anointing of the Sick is to be available. Priests are asked to be courageous and generously respond to those who are in proximate danger of death and request anointing and viaticum. The directions, procedures and policies of all medical and care facilities must be strictly followed when visiting the ill. The use of an instrument, such as a glove or cotton swab is allowed for the anointing. If you anoint a person who has COVID-19, outside a hospital, please check with your County Health Department with regard to the need to self-quarantine.

Parish and Chancery Offices may now open. The Chancery Office will be fully operational on Monday, April 27th. A decision to open up a parish office will depend on your circumstances.

All priests are encouraged to provide reasonable and prudent measures to ensure everyone's safety, including their own. Everyone is encouraged to continue to practice good hygiene. People who feel sick should remain at home as should vulnerable and at-risk populations. People and priests may wear a mask.