



**OFFICE OF THE VICAR GENERAL
DIOCESE OF BROOKLYN**

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May 21, 2020

PLAN FOR THE REOPENING OF OUR CHURCHES

Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio is pleased to announce the Diocese of Brooklyn will slowly work towards going back to normal by opening the doors of the churches on May 26, 2020 for private prayer and devotion as well as for funerals and limited celebrations of baptisms and weddings. The following directives will apply in general and individual churches should prepare further directions which the faithful must adhere to when visiting a church.

PLEASE NOTE THAT THE CHURCHES **MAY** OPEN THEIR DOORS ON MAY 26TH. IF A PARISH IS NOT PREPARED TO DO SO ON THAT DATE, PASTORS OR ADMINISTRATORS MUST EMAIL THE DATES THAT THEY WILL BE ABLE TO REOPEN. Please email Adriana Rodriguez at arodriguez@desalesmedia.org.

REOPENING SCHEDULE

- Stage 1: Opening of Churches for private prayer and devotion, Funerals, Baptisms and Weddings (May 26th) **Please see pages 3 & 4 for details.**
- Stage 2: Limited Celebrations of Daily Mass (No date has been set yet)
- Stage 3: Limited Celebrations of Sunday Mass (No date has been set yet)
- Stage 4: Celebration of First Holy Communion and Confirmation (No date has been set yet)

The commencement dates of these stages (numbers 2,3, and 4) will be announced.

CHURCHES

- Before opening pastors and administrators may be interested in sanitizing the church. According to the CDC, the virus can only live on surfaces for a limited time (ranging from hours to days depending on the type of surface). Since churches have been closed for over two months, it may be something to consider, for the purpose of reassuring parishioners. If you would like this procedure done and for information, please email Greg Roach at groach@rocklynasset.org for approved contractors and schedules.
- After the churches reopen for private prayer and devotion, the full reopening of the churches for liturgical celebrations will begin after the order for reopening of large gatherings has been given. This is important because of the danger of gathered crowds and the possible spread of the virus.

- With respect to the dates of the opening and use of churches, the above stages will be followed.
- One door should be opened for entrance into the church. However, all doors should be available for egress in emergencies.
- The church should be marked off with painter's tape to show areas that adhere to social distancing guidelines. Pastors or administrators who may need assistance in creating social distance seating plans for the church may reach out to Greg Roach (groach@rocklynasset.org) and/or Rob Dadona (rdadona@rocklynasset.org) for assistance.
- The elderly and all who are health-compromised **MUST** be advised to stay home. Communications to parishioners should tell them that anyone who feels sick in any way **must** stay home. Parishioners should be asked to take their temperatures before leaving their home and should stay home if the temperature is over 100 degrees.
- The church will have been measured and marked off, respecting social distancing norms.
- There is to be NO holy water in the fonts.
- Crying rooms and other rooms aside from the main church **must** be kept closed and locked.
- Hymnals, missalettes and any other worship aids **must** be removed from the pews and stored away.
- Bulletins **must** not be distributed, nor should there be any literature available for people to take. Bulletins could be uploaded to parish websites.
- Parishioners **must** be advised of the requirement to wear masks, which they will bring on their own from home. No one should be in church without a mask.
- Hand sanitizer should be available at the entrance to church but parishioners are to be encouraged to bring their own from home, as well.
- Restrooms should be open and available but used by one person at a time and must be cleaned regularly.
- It is advisable that churches be cleaned after each opening.
- For the foreseeable future, parishes may not schedule any events which will draw crowds and make social distancing difficult.

PRIVATE PRAYER AND DEVOTION

- The church will be open for a limited time period each day. Pastors will decide on these hours of opening based on the needs of the community. The church should remain open for no more than 4 hours each day. **These hours should not coincide with the time a Mass is celebrated in the church.**
- There is to be no congregating of people (e.g. gathering to say a rosary together). There should not be more than ten (10) people in the church and there cannot be a group gathered.
- The faithful **must** be instructed not to touch statues or other devotional objects in the church.
- Two ushers or other volunteers **MUST** be present in the church to assure that social distancing rules are observed and to determine whether the church is getting too crowded.

Again, these rules will vary depending on the individual church's needs and configuration. Parishioners should be made aware of these rules before the May 26th opening and by way of signage in the church itself.

Please note that some churches in high population density areas will not be able to open on the May 26th as they may have to set a different timeline. Please ask your parishioners to be respectful of the decisions pastors and administrators will make based on the requirements of their individual communities.

FUNERALS

The directives indicated above apply for funerals as well.

Funeral services will be permitted but are to be strictly limited to 10 people. The funeral service must be the **Funeral Outside of Mass** (the liturgy that is used for funerals during the Paschal Triduum). Holy Communion should not be distributed at these services.

Persons attending the funeral **must** be seated using social distancing norms (Six [6] feet apart) except for members of the same household and everyone must wear a mask or face covering. Funerals should begin with the casket in place in front of the sanctuary and with the participants seated. There is to be no procession into or out of the church. No worship aids should be distributed or used.

BAPTISMS

Baptisms will take place with social distancing guidelines being enforced and limited to 10 or fewer participants. The water **must** be changed for each baptism. Baptisms can be celebrated only with prior consultation with the Office of the Chancellor. Please email saguggia@diobrook.org.

WEDDINGS

Weddings will take place with social distancing guidelines being enforced and, at first, limited to 10 or fewer participants. Weddings should be celebrated with the Rite of Marriage Outside of Mass. No Nuptial Masses should be celebrated at this time. Holy Communion should not be distributed at this time. Weddings can be celebrated only with prior consultation with the Office of the Chancellor. Please email saguggia@diobrook.org.

OUTDOOR SERVICES

Although the possibility for this may be limited in Brooklyn and Queens, some parishes may be capable of conducting services outdoors in parking lots or similar spaces, perhaps using a tent or having people remain in cars. Please be aware that social distancing norms and hygiene guidelines must be observed. **At this point, too, please note that no gatherings of more than ten (10) persons is permitted. If you are contemplating an outdoor services, please submit your written plan to vgeneral@diobrook.org for approval before implementation.**

ANOINTING OF THE SICK

Anointings will be celebrated with the usual safety measures in place. Priests will wear mask and gloves and the anointing will take place with the use of a cotton ball which is to be reverently disposed of after each anointing. Any guidelines that are in place in hospitals or other institutions must be respected. There are to be no celebrations of communal anointings in church.

CONFESSIONS

Confessions will take place with the priest and penitent both wearing masks and remaining at least six (6) feet distant from one another. A space other than a traditional confessional might need to be used. A larger space will be needed. A barrier system could be devised. **Care must be taken to assure that no lines or groups form for confessions.**

OBTAINING CLEANING SUPPLIES FROM ICS

Pastors and administrators should take note to this link to Institutional Commodities Services (ICS) where sanitizing supplies (such as hand sanitizer and cleaning supplies) can be obtained:

<https://nyics.org/hand-sanitizer-cleaning-supplies>

QUESTIONS?

Questions about any of the above guidelines or about particular situations may be addressed to the Vicar General's Office vgeneral@diobrook.org.