



Diocese of Belleville
Reopening of Churches Task Group

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document is an Executive Summary of the multi-phased protocols and procedures, known as the Plan, for reopening churches and resuming public participation in the sacramental life of the Church for the Catholic dioceses in Illinois. The full Plan is provided at the end of this Executive Summary. The Plan has been developed by the bishops of the Chicago Province in consultation with and the approval of state and local public health officials and civil authorities.

Four guiding principles undergird the multi-phased Plan:

1. Everything possible should be done to provide people the solace of the church's sacramental life in a timely and reasonable way.
2. The current situation in Illinois remains dangerous and fragile. While much has been achieved, there remains the potential that the gains could be lost by a second more virulent wave.
3. Trust needs to be established that the top priority in any Plan is the safety and wellbeing of people. We cannot take for granted that people will return just because churches are reopened.
4. Calling people to exercise faithful citizenship will be key. Each Catholic will need to take personal responsibility for the common good as well as their own safety.

With these principles in mind, a Plan to resume the full scope of public sacramental celebrations, liturgies and faith practices prudently and gradually, has been designed. The Plan envisions a set of required measures and phases. There will be an ongoing review of the Plan so that adjustments are made in accord with new data. The basics of the Plan are as follows:

1. A robust **communications** effort to inform parishes and parishioners of the Plan and any updates to it.
2. Each parish needs to **recruit** volunteers who are not in the "vulnerable population" (over 65 or with health issues) at the parish level to assist the pastor in implementing the Plan.
3. The selected volunteers are to complete **training** by way of a webinar. The webinar will be made available 'on demand' beginning Friday, May 22.

4. A checklist of readiness to reopen will be provided to each parish to complete at each phase. Each parish is to follow the steps in the document entitled *Parish Reopening Plan* confirming completion of all action steps and demonstrating that there are enough trained volunteers to execute it.
5. **Phase I** allows for parishes to reopen for Baptism, Reconciliation, Weddings and Funerals with a limit of 10 attendees (not including ministers).
6. **Phase IA** allows for parishes to reopen for private prayer and adoration with a limit of 10 attendees (plus ministers).
7. Given the training schedule noted above, it is anticipated that all parishes, if they choose to do so, could be opened by May 30 for Phase I followed by Phase IA when ready.
8. Parishes may reopen at different times. It is essential that all parish teams are in place and trained before the doors to the churches are reopened. The guidelines are created to protect the people. Many people may not be ready to return for fear of contagion. We will need to rebuild their trust. The only way to do that is to keep them safe. Take your time. Have all safety procedures in place; train all parish volunteers; read ALL guidelines and job aids.
9. **Phase II** allows for reopening for weekday and weekend Masses for larger groups depending on the guidelines from the state and the capacity of the church building.
10. Through ongoing discussions with pastors, health care professionals and civil authorities, there will be a **review** of the Plan at each stage with an eye to making adjustments in accord with new data.

MULTI-PHASED PLAN FOR REOPENING CHURCHES

PHASE I: Limited Sacramental Celebrations and Private Prayer

Parish Actions and Responsibilities

- The pastor will need the assistance of the parish community, as he will be required to create a parish leadership team consisting of 6 people, including himself, to co-manage operations and to supervise cleaning, set-up and greeting.
- The parish business manager or someone designated by the pastor will serve as the compliance manager for the parish and assist with the completion of necessary compliance forms.
- The entire team of leaders is required to attend the training webinar and complete a checklist of readiness for reopening (*Parish Reopening Plan*).
- The parish will need to maintain an on-going procurement program for safety and cleaning supplies.
- Based on completion of Sections 1-5 in the *Parish Reopening Plan* and the necessary training and preparation, each parish will have the prerogative to offer Baptisms, Weddings, Funerals, and Reconciliation in the church within the current limit of 10 attendees excluding ministers and on-site staff (“Phase I”).
- With additional preparation, each parish may optionally offer Eucharistic Adoration and private prayer times (“Phase IA”). In choosing to do so, parish leadership teams must comply with all published bishops’ guidelines outlining precautions preparing for, during and after the rite(s).

NOTE: During Phase I, parishes will not be allowed to offer either daily or Sunday Mass, even with 10 or fewer attendees. The resumption of public Mass, regardless of the number of attendees, is a more complex process, which requires the input of lessons that will be learned

from Phase I. To that end, parishes and dioceses will collaborate to gather data to improve the protocols and processes of the Plan before we move to worship services in Phase II.

Archdiocesan/ Diocesan Actions and Responsibilities

The archdiocese or diocese, depending on capacity, will provide the following services to support the parishes and pastors:

- The Archdiocese of Chicago has developed a standard webinar based on these guidelines and will make it available to the other dioceses in the Chicago Province. The webinar provided by the Archdiocese of Chicago will serve as the required training webinar for clergy, parish leaders and volunteers in the Diocese of Belleville. This webinar will assist the pastor in managing the Plan in each phase.
- Create and distribute to parishes a video message from the local bishop to explain the Plan for reopening churches.
- Create a dedicated email box that will be monitored by staff to answer questions or otherwise support parishes that feel they cannot open safely without additional help. The dedicated email box for the Diocese of Belleville is reopening@diobelle.org.
- Evaluate data from parishes on their Phase I and IA experience to adapt Phase II protocols for larger numbers, which will include public Mass.
- Work with government officials to explore possible increases in crowd size taking into consideration the capacity of church buildings.

PHASE II: Resumption of Public Masses

Parish Actions and Responsibilities

In Phase II parishes may need to complete a checklist of readiness like the *Parish Reopening Plan* to offer daily and Sunday Mass. Parishes will also continue to celebrate Baptisms, Weddings, Funerals and Adoration. Given the more complex nature of celebrations of the Mass, entering Phase II will require parishes to:

- Expand the number of parish team members if civil authorities permit an increase in the crowd size for Phase II.
- Maintain an on-going procurement program for safety and cleaning supplies.
- Continue recruitment and training of new, less vulnerable volunteers as needed.
- Develop logistical procedures in accord with the guidelines of the Plan to manage more frequent and larger services that cover actions before, during and after the rites.
- Implement a safe and secure attendance reservation/ ticketing system to maintain order and facilitate possible contact tracing of infection.
- Complete a detailed checklist for implementing Phase II.

Archdiocesan/Diocesan Actions and Responsibilities

To support the parishes in the preparation and implementation of Phase II, the Archdiocese or Diocese will:

- Establish and update requirements for all services and rites according to the standards of government officials, health care experts and church authorities.
- Provide additional required webinars and training, as needed.
- Gather feedback from parishioners across the diocese on how well the safety protocols are working and how comfortable they are with church precautions for their safety.
- Continually monitor feedback on execution and resources to assist in problem solving through ongoing communication with parish leadership, state and local authorities and public health officials.

(Updated May 18, 2020)