



From Bishop Jensen
Diocese of Prince George
Update: May 15, 2020

Phase 1 of Reopening Parishes during the COVID-19 Emergency

Last week the Provincial Health Officer announced that restrictions recommended to deal with the pandemic will begin to be eased from the middle of May. In light of this development, and with guidelines prepared by a working group of scientists at the request of the US bishops, the following practices should be followed:

- Sunday and weekday Mass may be opened to the public after May 18, but the limit of 50 persons is still in force until further notice. Members of the same household may sit together, but provision should be made for appropriate physical distancing in the pews from everyone else;
- Since the limit on the number of persons who may gather remains in effect, the dispensation from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass continues in the diocese;
- Holy water should not be at the church entrance, but hand sanitizer should be available;
- Regularly disinfect commonly touched areas;
- Collection baskets should not be passed from hand to hand; either use baskets with long handles or place a basket at a central point;
- The offertory procession should be omitted;
- The Sign of Peace is optional (cf. GIRM 154; *Redemptionis Sacramentum*, 71); if used, it should be a simple bow, not a handshake;
- Communicants should maintain the recommended distance from each other as they walk in procession. They may receive either on the tongue or in the hand;
- Holy Communion from the chalice should not be offered to the congregation.

Parishioners should observe proper basic hygiene, e.g., regular handwashing, and stay away from the church when experiencing symptoms or if they have underlying health conditions that put them at greater risk.