

Dear Brothers:

Thank you for your perseverance and diligence as we engage the challenges to ministry caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. We continue imploring the mercy of our Heavenly Father to end the pandemic. We ask the intercession of our Mother, Santa María de Guadalupe, and her chaste spouse, St. Joseph, for the grace to minister to the faithful, providing them essential spiritual nourishments.

The recent decision of the Supreme Court regarding indoor church services allows us an opportunity to return to the celebration of the Sacraments inside our churches. We must continue being vigilant in making sure we provide as safe environment as possible.

The General Principles pertaining to health and safety protocols still apply (e.g. the vulnerable should remain home, facial covering, physical distancing, frequent hand-washing, and contact tracing). We all must maintain continued vigilance in practicing these prudent safety measures in the exercise of ministry in the parishes.

The California Public Health Department maintains the 4-tiered system for reopening based on the level of risk in each county. The CPDH provides a county-per-county update every week on Tuesday.

Tier Purple (Widespread)	–	Open indoors for 25% of maximum capacity of the church
Tier Red (Substantial)	–	Open indoors with modification (<i>maximum 25% capacity</i>)
Tier Orange (Moderate)	–	Open indoors with modification (<i>maximum 50% capacity</i>)
Tier Yellow (Minimal)	–	Open indoors with modifications (<i>maximum 50% capacity</i>)

It is my expectation that every pastor/parochial administrator will check the updated information available at the CDPH website or their county's health department website in order to plan accordingly. Based on the level of risk in each county (e.g. purple, red, orange, or yellow) the pastor should adjust the number of congregants available to attend the Sacrifice of the Mass or other liturgical services.

For example:

- Churches in counties where the risk level is purple may offer Mass inside for the number of congregants equal to 25% of seating capacity.
- Churches in counties where the risk level is red may offer Mass inside for the number of congregants equal to 25% of seating capacity.
- Churches in counties where the risk level is orange may offer Mass inside for the number of congregants equal to 50% of seating capacity
- Churches in counties where the risk level is yellow may offer Mass inside for the number of congregants equal to 50% of seating capacity.

Worth noting:

- Online gatherings with adults may still be the preferred, precautionary practice. Gatherings of children or young people must abide by the guidelines established for those activities.
- The assessed risk tier only affects the number of congregants allowed. It does not alter the other necessary public health guidelines for liturgy and other adult religious gatherings.

- Given the continued limits on the number of congregants for indoor liturgies and adult meetings, outdoor gatherings may be advisable, weather permitting.
- There should be no singing or chanting by the congregation indoors.

General Guidelines

- The use of facial coverings remains mandatory
- Physical distancing of 6 feet between households must be always maintained
- The [Guidelines for the Resumption of Public Masses](#) (May 26, 2020 and its [Addendum](#) of June 3, 2020) remain in effect.
- The Liturgical and Pastoral Guidelines of September 29, 2020 are discontinued and replaced by this document.
- As vaccination against Covid-19 becomes more widely available, the safety protocols which have been in place for the celebration of the Sacraments remain in effect **and** must be observed.

On the Celebration of the Mass

- While moving sacramental rituals indoors, pastors are to continue providing an opportunity for the outdoor participation in the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass (e.g., maintain an outdoor Mass, drive-in theatre style Mass). Also, continue to provide access to the Mass by livestreaming and other media.
- Pastors are to continue providing an opportunity for the outdoor reception of Holy Communion (at least on Sundays and Solemnities normally of precept) for those who wish to live-stream or watch a televised Mass.
- Where it is needed to accommodate the maximum capacity limits and the number of people who wish to attend Mass, pastors should adjust the Mass schedule in order to add an adequate number of Masses in accordance with the law, thereby allowing the faithful ample opportunity to participate in the Sacrifice of the Mass.
- Parishes should have a sign-up method in order to ensure the appropriate number of congregants in any one Mass.
- Congregational chanting or singing remains suspended, any sung parts of the Mass or other Liturgy should be sung by the presider and cantor.

On Celebrating the Sacrament of Baptism

The [Guidelines for Resumption of Celebrating the Sacrament of Baptism](#) (June 11, 2020) still apply with the issuance of the CPDH tier system for reopening. Depending upon the number of people allowed to gather indoors (or outdoors), baptisms are to be scheduled accordingly. Individual baptisms are recommended. Group baptisms should be limited.

On Celebrating the Sacrament of Marriage

The [Guidelines for the Resumption of the Public Celebration of the Sacrament of Marriage](#) (June 11, 2020) remain applicable during this period of reopening. Depending on the county where the parish is located, the Sacrament of Marriage is to be celebrated according to the guidance that corresponds to the county's assessed risk tier. The tier will describe what are the safe protocols regarding the number of congregants and whether the ceremony should take place indoors or outdoors. Regarding celebrations

of Marriage in a location other than the parish campus, in such cases, priests are reminded to obtain the necessary delegation. Contact Fr. Chris Frazer at the Pastoral Center.

On the Celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation

The Sacrament of Confirmation will be celebrated by the Bishop or the Vicar General, in accordance with the schedule published by the Office of the Bishop. These celebrations of Confirmation will be celebrated conforming to tier status of the individual parish's county. In the event that not all confirmandi are able to be confirmed by the Bishop or Vicar General, delegation will be granted to the Pastor or Parochial Administrator for the necessary additional celebrations of the Sacrament. A pastor or parochial administrator must have written delegation from the Bishop's Office prior to any celebrations.

On Celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation and the Anointing of the Sick

The [Guidelines for the Sacrament of Reconciliation During the Time of the COVID-19 Pandemic](#) (June 24, 2020) are still in effect. The pastors are urged to schedule regular hours when the faithful may approach the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Be mindful of the number of people who gather together indoors during the regularly scheduled celebration of the Sacrament. The health and safety protocols implemented are to be maintained.

During the Season of Lent, pastors should generously provide additional opportunities for the faithful to avail themselves of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Communal Penance Services should not be celebrated this year.

On administering the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick, priests are to refer to the message of the Bishop sent to the clergy via email on March 19, 2020. This pastoral guidance still stands during this time. Communal Celebrations of the Anointing of the Sick should only take place among people in the same residence. The Office of Worship will provide suggestions for World Day of the Sick.

On the Celebration of the Rites of the Order of Christian Funerals

The [Guidelines for the Public Celebration of the Order of Christian Funerals in the Diocese of Sacramento](#) (June 9, 2020) and the [Additional Directives](#) (July 15, 2020) are still applicable. The tier system may allow for more people to be present in the rites depending on the county where the parish is located.

On Various Lay Ministers and Other Lay Adult Groups

The Reminders and Additional Instructions for the Various Lay Ministers and Other Parish Volunteers During the Time of the COVID-19 Pandemic issued on June 24, 2020 are still applicable.

Pastors are to be mindful of these guidelines and instructions when volunteers return to serving in various ministries.

Pastors may continue online gatherings of adults as a responsible precautionary measure.

Catholic Schools, Faith formation programs, and youth ministry have their own appropriate guidelines for gatherings and activities.

On Other Pastoral Ministries and Services

Pastors/Parochial Administrators/Priests/Deacons are encouraged to offer pastoral services (e.g. spiritual direction, pastoral counseling, marriage preparation, etc.) mindful of observing the current health and safety protocols (e.g. physical distancing, masks, etc.).