



DIocese OF OGDENSBURG

Office of Communications

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

CHURCHES WITH APPROVED PLANS CAN EXPAND CAPACITY TO 25 PERCENT

With Governor Andrew Cuomo's announcement that churches may open for public worship for up to 25 percent of the building's seating capacity, effective immediately, Bishop Terry R. LaValley has authorized the Catholic Churches in the Diocese of Ogdensburg, with approved parish reopening plans, to open up their churches for public worship to accommodate up to 25% of the building's seating capacity. Social distancing and other precautions must be followed according to parish plans. Previously, churches with approved plans were able to open for only up to 10 persons, in compliance with state regulations.

Parish reopening plans must include the following:

- Churches will undergo continuing intensive cleaning and sanitizing.
- Individuals who are at higher risk with the coronavirus and those who are sick are asked to remain at home.
- All parishioners ages 2 and over will wear face coverings while in church to protect themselves and others.
- There will be no holy water in fonts.
- There will be no offertory processions.
- There will be no passing of the collection basket. The basket will be placed in a fixed location and parishioners will be asked to drop their contributions into the basket as they enter or leave the church.
- The distribution of Holy Communion will be different.
- No worship aids, such as missalettes and hymnals, will be available for use.
- There will be no choirs in the early phases of our return to public worship.
- There will be no congregating in the church, on the steps or at the doors of the church.

Though some parishes will re-open with limited capacity, Bishop LaValley has dispensed the faithful from their obligation to attend Sunday Mass until further notice.

Bishop Terry R. LaValley, Bishop of the Diocese of Ogdensburg, said:

"We are overjoyed that more of the faithful are able to gather in public prayer and worship at Mass together. We ask that everyone exercise patience and understanding as our churches work to comply with the plans and guidelines that are intended to help keep us all safe. Please check your parish website, social media pages or contact your parish office to learn your parish's re-opening schedule. Let us continue to pray for one another."