



DIocese OF OGDENSBURG

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BISHOP LAVALLEY OUTLINES REOPENING PLAN DEVELOPED WITH EXPERT CONSULTATION

Bishop Terry R. LaValley has opened a dialogue with the priests of the Diocese of Ogdensburg about the steps that must be taken to reopen churches in the diocese for public worship. Bishop LaValley is working to ensure any return to public worship is done with the safety of our parishioners, priests and ministers as the main priority.

Bishop LaValley, representatives of the diocesan Office of Worship and administration continue to consult with public health officials and a committee of medical professionals to establish guidelines that will aid local parishes in developing reopening plans.

Those guidelines will require some changes to how the faithful of the North Country typically gather and worship.

“We yearn for the day when we can return to Church to be with our parish family in worship and praise of our God,” Bishop LaValley said. “We hunger to be fed with the Bread of Life. But this will be a gradual process that requires significant changes in the way we have always done things so that we can provide as safe an environment as possible for those who would enter our sacred spaces. Each parish will prepare a specific plan that will incorporate these new features of our Mass experience. These changes are temporary, and the guidelines will change as we make progress against the Coronavirus. We thank you for your patience and understanding, and I continue to pray for you all.”

These changes include:

- Churches will undergo continual intensive cleaning and sanitizing.
- At the outset, only a certain number of people will be able to physically attend Mass. This is largely determined by the size of the church and the requirements of social distancing.
- 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 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.
- Bishop LaValley will extend the dispensation for Sunday Mass until further notice.

Pastors and parishes will be asked to use these guidelines to develop plans for the celebration of Mass at each worship site.