



PINE GULF CATHOLIC

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THE NEWSPAPER OF THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF BILOXI

Resumption of public Masses slated for weekend of May 23-24 with social distancing guidelines in effect

Dear Sisters and Brothers in our Risen Lord,

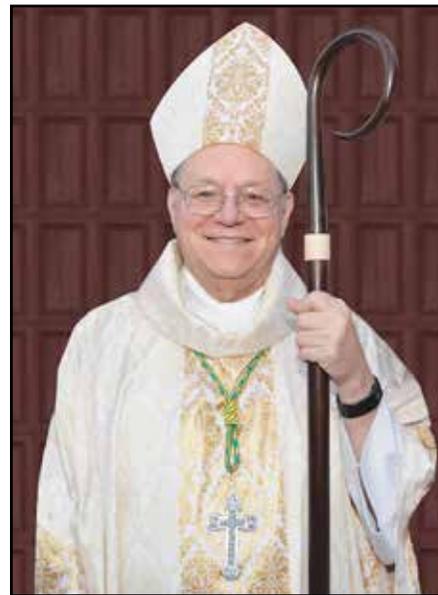
Jesus Christ is Risen. He is Risen indeed!

As a Church, this is our Easter proclamation. It is the proclamation of our lives as Christians. He is Risen! He is our hope and our salvation. I have been praying for each of you. I have been touched by your love for the Eucharist and the Easter Sacraments and your support of your parish and our priests. I am also grateful for your patience over the past weeks. I believe the Holy Spirit has been creating within us a hunger for the Eucharist.

I write to you today with the news that we will start public Masses, without obligation and complying with the requirements of social distancing. Our priests have received my decree "RETURNING TO WORSHIP TOGETHER" for the opening of churches May 23 and 24.

Your pastors have been working hard to prepare our churches in order for us to come together again as a community of faith. I encourage you to work with your pastor in creating a safe environment for all as we come back together as community. Protecting each other from the Coronavirus remains of utmost importance. We must keep in mind that opening the churches for the public celebration of Mass does not signal the 'end' of this contagious pandemic. Everyone's vigilance in regard to proper distancing, hygiene, and other measures is crucial whenever we gather.

As we come back together as a community of faith, let us work in unity for the good of everyone. Bear in mind the urging of St. Paul to the Church in Philippi: "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind



Bishop Kihneman

regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus..." Philippians 2:3-5. Let us take care of one another.

While the Sunday obligation to participate in Mass continues to be dispensed for the faithful, it is important that we have the opportunity to come together as community and celebrate God's gift of Himself in Holy Communion. These communal moments are moments we are to gather with the Crucified and Risen Savior.

I am remembering you in my prayers and Masses I offer daily.

Sincerely yours in our Risen Lord,

Most Reverend Louis F. Kihneman, III
Bishop of Biloxi

SEE PAGE 10 FOR GUIDELINES

CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF BILOXI

INITIAL STEPS FOR RETURNING TO WORSHIP TOGETHER

Below is a list of things that should be done/prepared for before we can welcome parishioners back to our churches.

PREPARATION

† Bishop Kihneman will continue to dispense the faithful from the obligation to participate in Holy Mass, and anyone who is ill will be asked to stay home in charity to others.

† Vulnerable individuals, those 65 and older or with underlying health conditions, should continue to shelter in place. Families with vulnerable individuals are encouraged to continue to take special precautions.

† Hand sanitizer should be provided at church entrances and at other appropriate places in the church (e.g., at the credence table, the Priest Celebrant's chair, restrooms) and other parish buildings.

† Masks for clergy, ushers, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, Altar Servers, and extra for parishioners should be provided. (Can be ordered through Sun Coast Supply, (228) 868-2522.)

† Pews and the floor where the communion line forms should be marked with six-foot spacing

(using painter's tape, etc.). In ordinary circumstances, every other pew will not be used.

† Pews, including tops, seats and kneelers, are to be sanitized before all Masses as well as all touch surfaces.

† If books and reusable worship aids cannot be sanitized between each Mass, they should be removed from the pews/church.

† Chairs in the sanctuary should be moved to be six feet apart and ministers at the Altar should be reminded of proper distancing (tape markings may be helpful).

† Holy water fonts should be empty and not be used. Other methods of providing holy water (e.g., small individual/family bottles) can be devised, if desired.

† Church doors should be frequently sanitized or left open.

† Parishes should consider handwashing signs for restrooms and assure soap, paper towels, and hand sanitizer are replenished. The Diocese of Dallas has free printable signs in English, Spanish, and

Vietnamese: www.cathdal.org/handwash. Other instructional signage may be needed.

† Livestreaming of Mass should be available, contact Terry Dickson for instruction if needed, tdickson@biloxidiocese.org, (228) 702-2126.

† Preparations should be made to livestream Mass into the Parish Hall or other appropriate space to accommodate the 6-foot spacing of parishioners and for them to be able to receive Holy Communion. The space should be prepared as indicated above. If you do not have a parish hall or other suitable space, contact your Dean, the Vicar General's office, or Bishop's office for alternative ideas.

† Pastors/priests will be able to temporarily increase the number of weekend Masses and may wish to consider Masses for special groups: the elderly, youth, etc.

† Communicate your plan with local officials: mayor, police chief, sheriff, etc.