



May 24, 2020

## DIOCESE OF JOLIET

### Phased Reopening of Our Churches

Subject: Reopening Plan for Saint Peter the Apostle Church amid COVID-19

Hello Saint Peter's family.

I pray that you and your loved ones are healthy. As you may have seen, Bishop Richard Pates, recently shared our multi-phased plan for reopening churches in the Diocese of Joliet.

Specifically,

- **Phase I** allows for parishes to reopen for baptisms, reconciliation, weddings and funerals with a limit of ten attendees.
- **Phase IA** allows for parishes to reopen for private prayer and adoration with a limit of TEN attendees.
- **Phase II** allows for reopening for weekday and weekend Masses for larger groups depending on the guidelines which will be issued by the State of Illinois at a later date, and the capacity of the church building.

### Our Saint Peter's Reopening Plan

First and foremost, it is important for everyone to understand that our efforts will prioritize the safety and wellbeing of all while maintaining due respect and reverence for the sacraments and liturgical norms of our faith.

I will assemble a Parish Reopening Leadership Team with parishioner co-captains to lead our efforts. Together, we will participate in required training from the Diocese to ensure that our parish reopening plan conforms to the guidelines developed by the Diocese in collaboration with civil and healthcare authorities. We will also obtain protective and cleaning supplies, as well as guidance on purchasing/maintaining supplies ongoing.

### Volunteers Needed

We will need volunteers to assist with various aspects of our parish reopening plan. Importantly, leadership team members and volunteers must not be part of a "vulnerable population" (i.e., suffering from an underlying medical condition such as diabetes or lung disease; undergoing cancer treatment, etc.) Those over the age of 60 should consult with the Parish Leadership Team about possibly serving as a volunteer.

I ask all of you who are younger than 60 and healthy with no underlying health conditions to consider assisting with one of three reopening teams. **I especially encourage Religious Education families, high school (with parental consent) and college students, as well as young adults, to serve and volunteer for teams.**



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- **Set-up Team.** Sample duties include ensuring that all supplies needed for each sacramental celebration/gathering are ready for use, entrances and exits are marked and propped physically open prior to attendees' arrival/departure, etc.
  - **Greeting Team.** Sample duties include assisting in managing the flow of congregants as they enter the church, keeping attendance to 10 people or less at all times, making sure attendees use hand sanitizer upon entering, are wearing a mask, and are reminded not to enter if ill; directing people to appropriate seating/waiting areas, etc.
  - **Cleaning Team.** Sample duties include maintaining and cleaning essential and trafficked areas of the church before and after the church has been used. Masks and gloves will be provided if you do not have your own. All approved cleaning/disinfecting supplies will be provided.

The Reopening Leadership Team, chaired by Deacon Fred, and I will make sure that all volunteers are properly trained.

A volunteer sign-up form can be found on the parish website or by using this link: [reopening-volunteer-form](#) Please complete the volunteer sign-up form to indicate your willingness and ability to volunteer. From those that step forward, we will also request that some act as volunteer captains to help lead each of the three teams.

### Timing for Our Reopening

As I mentioned, the Parish Reopening Leadership Team members and I will need to complete required training, which became available the week of May 17. Once we complete the training, we will need to review and complete tasks assigned to all parishes as part of a reopening certification process to be approved by the Diocese. Therefore, the soonest that any parish in the Diocese will realistically open for sacramental celebrations, private prayer or Eucharistic Adoration is likely the weekend of May 30. However, our parish, like all others in the Diocese, will move forward at a pace and timing appropriate for our situation.

Following our training and certification approval, at Saint Peter's, we will only open our church once the Reopening Leadership Team and I feel confident that we have the right volunteers in place to make it possible to reopen. Again, the need for parishioner assistance cannot be overstated.

Because we must limit the number of attendees to minimize the risk of the spread of disease, and in order to avoid "turning people away" at our doors, we are working to establish an on-line registration system. Once the registration site is made available, we will encourage parishioners to register using the form, so that we know can safely manage the number of attendees at services and Mass to avoid overcrowding. We ask you to be patient as we establish this new system, and further ask that you be understanding as we try to make the Mass available to all who wish to attend under these limitations.

The guidelines and measures required to reopen are designed to protect our wellbeing and that of our broader community. It is good to note that we do this together as from the first pages of Scripture we learn that we indeed are "our brother's keeper." Our Lord Jesus Christ prayed, "that they all may be one" (Jn 17:21) and commanded us "love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another" (Jn 13:34). Our collective patience, willingness to help and the care we take to reopen is a demonstration of our unity and love for one another.

May God grant you His peace during this difficult time and may He manifest His love and presence to you in abundant ways. If you have any questions, please contact Deacon Fred Maier at [liturgy@stpeteritasca.com](mailto:liturgy@stpeteritasca.com).

Sincerely yours in Christ,

*Fr. Slawek*

