



**PRESS RELEASE**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**ARCHBISHOP GOMEZ ANNOUNCES GUIDELINES FOR REOPENING OF CHURCHES**

Following recommendations announced today by county public health and government officials for the reopening of places of worship for religious services at limited capacity, the Archdiocese of Los Angeles has directed parishes to prepare plans for reopening churches starting with allowing for personal private prayer and moving toward the celebration of daily Mass with the earliest date beginning on June 3, the Memorial of St. Charles Lwanga and Companions, and the earliest date to begin Sunday Mass would be on June, 7, 2020, the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity.

In a letter to parishes, Archbishop José H. Gomez presented the [guidelines](#) for reopening which he prepared together with the Auxiliary Bishops, the Council of Priests and lay advisors of the Archdiocese “based on the safest practices” and after consultation with public health officials.

“As we enter this new moment, it is important to remember that the coronavirus is still out there, it is still contagious, and it is still dangerous,” emphasized the Archbishop. “So, we need to proceed with prudence and caution and concern to protect our most vulnerable parishioners. Let us continue to pray and stand together with our people as we begin to reopen our churches and our society.”

Parishes will present their plans to the regional bishop for approval. Once a parish plan has been approved a parish can open their church for private personal prayer. Parishes are encouraged to take the time to be fully prepared to ensure the safety of all who visit, worship, and serve at the parish before reopening.

The [guidelines](#) adhere to strict recommendations by public and government health officials including the limitation of up to 25% capacity with a maximum of 100 attendees for the 21-day revised public health order. Under “Step One” of the [guidelines](#), parishes are required to implement a series of sanitary measures, including undergoing a “deep cleaning” and making cleaning materials available to “disinfect points of contact after each visitor departs.” Missalette and hymnal books should be removed, holy water fonts emptied, and “frequently touched objects” such as statues should be cordoned off.

“The Blessed Sacrament may be exposed for silent adoration by the faithful, but no Benediction or other organized/communal prayer should take place,” during Step One, the guidelines state. In addition, live-streamed Masses will remain available during this phase and faithful in COVID-19 “vulnerable” categories should stay home. Individual Confessions can also be heard during the initial phase, with priest and penitent separated by at least six feet, wearing face coverings, and wiping down any surfaces touched.

The plan allows for parishes to move into Step Two as early as June 3, under which Daily Mass can be celebrated with social distancing measures. During Mass, Communion will be offered only in the form of bread and in the hand, and with priests sanitizing their hands before and after distributing Communion. For any gathering during Step Two, choirs are to be replaced with a cantor and accompanist and people should be dismissed after Mass by groups of pews.

The Archdiocese of Los Angeles is the largest Catholic diocese in the United States. The Archdiocese is comprised of five pastoral regions covering three counties, Los Angeles, Ventura, and Santa Barbara. For more information on the Archdiocese’s efforts to serve and protect the faithful during the COVID-19 pandemic, visit [www.lacatholics.org/emergency](http://www.lacatholics.org/emergency).

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