



Diocese of Fall River
Office of the Bishop
Most Reverend Edgar M. da Cunha, S.D.V., D.D.

May 18, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As I am sure you know by now, Massachusetts Governor Charlie Baker today issued directives for the first phase of reopening in the state of some industries and activities, including the opening of houses of worship. After meeting with the Presbyteral (or Priests') Council this morning and discussing this important matter, I want to communicate our plans as we work on guidelines to prepare our parishes for reopening.

The reopening of our parishes for public Masses and celebrations of sacraments is complex and requires careful planning and implementation. What must be of paramount concern throughout this process of resuming public worship is the safety of our people, our priests, deacons and lay ministers.

It is very clear that we will need time for this preparation to ensure that all mandatory safety standards may be met and that all churches may have on hand the necessary supplies. It goes without saying, that the Governor is not mandating the opening of our churches, but rather declaring that we can resume public worship as long as the necessary safety measures are observed.

After much discussion and discernment among the Presbyteral Council, it was decided that here in the Diocese of Fall River, we will open our churches for public Masses on the Feast of Pentecost, beginning with the Vigil on Saturday, May 30th.

Considering that many people, because of age or a medical condition, are advised not to come to church during this outbreak, or may prefer to stay home because of fear of becoming infected, the dispensation from the obligation to attend Mass remains in effect until further notice.

I want to remind you that between now and Pentecost churches will remain open for those who wish to visit for personal prayer and adoration. I am also allowing our priests to hear individual confessions of those who seek to receive the sacrament, observing the necessary safety measures.

Our Easter season culminates with Pentecost as we commemorate the occasion of God's sending the Holy Spirit upon Jesus' disciples after his Resurrection. This year, it will offer us added joy as we resume public celebrations of Masses in our churches across the Fall River Diocese.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Edgar M. da Cunha, S.D.V.
Bishop of Fall River