

March 31, 2021



Office of the Bishop

My Dear Brother Priest:

As you know during the past three weeks I have been consulting with the Diocesan Pastoral Council and the Presbyteral Council on the issue of the time-line for removing the restrictions on liturgical, pastoral, catechetical and social life in our parishes, schools and organizations as the pandemic recedes.

In all of these conversations, the participants stressed the need to lift these restrictions in a prudent way, while recognizing that the pandemic is still among us. It was also pointed out repeatedly that the provision of a general time-line at this time would be particularly helpful for the planning that the priests and parish and school staffs must carry out in preparing for the Fall.

With this in mind, I have concluded that the existing restrictions will be lifted in two phases. On Pentecost, the diocesan restrictions limiting activities related to faith formation, prayer, worship and catechetics, sports and scouts will be lifted for groups of less than fifty people, with social distancing and masking being observed. There can be no large social gatherings at this point.

On September first, social gatherings and all of the usual activities of parish life can return with social distancing and masking. It will be the decision of each parish or school at this point to determine how shared space utilization should be implemented from that date onward.

The past year has been one in which our local church at all levels has had to carry out its mission with unique burdens because of the need to guarantee health and safety for our communities. As those burdens are lifted, I know you join me in giving thanks to God for a pathway forward in this global crisis. And I give thanks to all of you for the many sacrifices that you have made and the immense creativity you have shown in bringing the Gospel to San Diego and Imperial Counties in these hard days.

May your Holy Week celebrations be filled with a special grace and joy this year.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Robert W. McElroy
Bishop of San Diego