

DIocese OF SAN BERNARDINO



For Immediate Release
July 15, 2020

Contact: John Andrews
(909) 255-4865

Diocese announces new restrictions in response to state order ***Public Masses will be held outdoors, only; churches are again closed***

Bishop Gerald Barnes announced July 13 the immediate suspension of public, indoor Masses in the Diocese of San Bernardino, along with a series of other directives, in response to California Governor Gavin Newsom's order further restricting indoor public gatherings including church services.

On July 15, the Diocese provided guidelines for celebrating public Masses outdoors on parish property. As with recent indoor Mass guidelines, no more than 100 people may attend an outdoor Mass, they must wear a mask and maintain six-foot social distancing.

Governor Newsom's order applies to 30 California counties that are experiencing a spike in COVID-19 cases, including San Bernardino and Riverside counties. The new directives are to be in place until further notice.

"The data is clear that community spread of infection is of increasing concern across the state, and continues to grow in those counties on the County Monitoring List," reads the order from the California Department of Public Health, which states that the number of hospitalized patients with COVID has increased between 50-100% in all regions in California, with a state average increase of 77% since June 12.

This week's announcement marks the second time Bishop Barnes has closed churches to the public since the COVID-19 outbreak. Masses had resumed in parishes June 14 with a maximum number of 100 participants. The Sacraments of Confession, Baptism, First Communion and Matrimony, along with Catholic burial rites, had also resumed. Under Bishop Barnes new directive, these sacramental activities can only occur outdoors. Parish offices are to be closed to the public and the Diocesan Pastoral Center will again operate with a small crew of essential workers only while remaining closed to the public.

"I know this feels very discouraging for many of the faithful and I share in that pain," said Bishop Barnes of again having to close churches in the Diocese. "Please be assured of my prayers and my solidarity with the people at this moment.

"Let us continue to turn to God to console us in this time of uncertainty and testing. He is always with us and our faith in Him will guide us through this pandemic."

#####