



## DIOCESE OF ST. PETERSBURG

Office of the Bishop

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In light of the governor's recent announcement to begin the process of reopening Florida, I wanted to share with you an update on when we might gather together again for Mass.

Please know that I would like nothing more than to resume gathering publicly for the celebration of Mass. But this decision must be made with prudence to prevent the spread of COVID-19, which has sadly affected so many in our country and has taken so many lives.

As your bishop, I am very concerned about your health and well-being and I am also very concerned about your spiritual health - your relationship with Jesus and your ability to access life-giving sacraments. I have been praying about next steps and consulting with clergy, staff and public officials in our Diocese.

**My hope is to resume public Masses within the month of May.** One possibility that I am exploring is to first begin with public worship at daily Mass Monday through Saturday when fewer people typically attend Mass.

I am not sure if this will happen just yet, but there is one thing I do know with certainty. When we return to our churches, we should all expect changes at Mass, to ensure everyone's health and safety, which is a top priority.

We are researching the best way to bring back the public celebration of the Mass while continuing to observe the guidelines of public health officials and preserving the dignity and reverence of our liturgical practices.

I'm also aware that some of you may not feel safe in returning to church, particularly if you are at higher risk due to age or health issues. Accommodations will be made to address this reality.

While we patiently wait, I urge you to remain strong in the faith and stay close to Christ in prayer.

I hope to have more updates for you in the coming days. Please know that you have been and continue to be in my prayers during this difficult time.

Please pray for me, that I may be the leader you deserve, and that God has called me to be. May God bless you!