



# Diocese of Brownsville

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May 1, 2020

To the Catholic Faithful of the Diocese of Brownsville:

I write to you to provide an update on the consultations I have had and on the advice I have received about when and how to open our churches for public Masses and other celebrations.

The general consensus among the Deans, the Consultors, and the Presbyteral Council is that it is not advisable to begin public Masses this coming weekend after May 1, under Phase 1 protocols permitted by the State of Texas. The virus is still spreading in the Valley and local officials are still quite concerned that a severe spike of cases is a real danger for us. Furthermore, our parishes will need time to prepare the clergy, volunteers, and church workers for the measures that will have to take place before, during and after every Mass when we do open.

I expect that fairly soon I can announce the date for resumption of the public celebration of Masses in the Diocese. What will determine the date? First, that the health trends in the Valley continue to improve, and secondly, that our parishes are all fully prepared to observe the health protocols that serve to defend us from a further outbreak of COVID-19 in the Rio Grande Valley.

We all have a lot of work to do to prepare ourselves and our communities for that day. Pastors and administrators of parishes are now authorized to begin having small group gatherings of volunteers and church workers who will be needed to assist the parish whenever Mass is celebrated. The size of these small gatherings is limited to and determined by the requirements of six feet social distancing. They should use masks at the time of the gathering.

The training for these volunteers will have to include how to disinfect the pews after Mass, and how to guide the people entering the church, how to help them be appropriately seated, go to receive Holy Communion, and exit the church, all in keeping

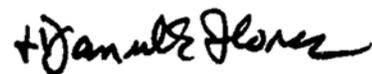
with the health safety protocols. With the help of the Diocese, parishes will need to secure sufficient quantities of disinfectants, extra facemasks and other supplies.

We will have to train ushers to keep a vigilant watch over how many people arrive for a given Mass, and to politely insure that distancing in family groups is being observed. This will be especially difficult for our smaller church buildings. The parishes will soon receive the specific protocols for the public celebration of Masses in the Diocese of Brownsville, and for the distribution of Holy Communion, so that we can all be as ready as possible to put them into practice when I do decree a date for the resumption of public Masses.

If our preparations in the parishes are in order, and if the local numbers of infections monitored by local health officials are encouraging, I will be able soon to announce the date for the resumption of public Masses.

I ask all of you to pray intensely that our preparations for the resumption of public Masses be effective, that health conditions in the whole Rio Grande Valley show improvement, and that soon we may begin to gather around the Altar of the Eucharistic Sacrifice of Christ our Risen Lord.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+Daniel E. Flores". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

+Daniel E. Flores  
Bishop of Brownsville