



## DIOCESE OF SACRAMENTO

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OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

February 6, 2021

Dear Friends in Christ:

The Supreme Court of the United States has issued an emergency ruling regarding indoor religious services. This ruling allows churches to open immediately and accommodate congregants up to a given percentage based on the colored tier structure adopted in the state.

Parishes in the “purple tier” are now able to open for indoor worship up to 25% capacity. I have informed our priests that if they can do so safely and responsibly, they may begin to offer Mass and other services immediately under this guideline.

With this decision, I am grateful that the Supreme Court has recognized the effective ability of church congregations to gather safely and responsibly while abiding by reasonable public health precautions.

I express my gratitude and admiration for the clergy and parishioners who have worked diligently to provide safe and reverential occasions for worship throughout the pandemic. In returning to indoor worship, we will continue the practice of prudent public health measures: wearing face masks, washing hands frequently, and maintaining social distancing.

The coronavirus still poses serious risks of infection, especially for the most vulnerable. The same prudent practices that we have employed for indoor worship must also be practiced outside in the community.

All the faithful are urged to keep holy the Lord’s Day by safely attending Mass in person or reverently participating in Mass through the internet or other media. Besides the opportunities to unite ourselves to the Sacrifice of the Mass, seek to sanctify the whole day with prayer, family fellowship, and works of mercy. Catholics in the Diocese of Sacramento continue to be dispensed from the Sunday obligation to attend the Sacrifice of the Mass in person.

To promote the health of yourself and your community, I encourage everyone to get vaccinated when possible. Your doctor can answer any questions regarding any personal health care concerns. My coworkers and I have compiled a list of frequently asked questions to address any moral concerns: <https://www.scd.org/news/covid-faq>

Let us open our hearts to receive the Eucharist with greater piety and charity. Our communities have already endured so much during this pandemic. I pray that the coming Lenten season and its penitential practices will also provide opportunities to be transformed by the Exodus journey from death to life, from darkness to light, from sin to grace with our Lord Jesus.

May the intercessions of both our Blessed Mother Mary and St. Joseph join with our prayers for God's mercy to end the pandemic, bring healing to the afflicted, protection and perseverance to those who care for them, and consolation to those who mourn the death of loved ones.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jaime Soto", with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

+Jaime Soto  
Bishop of Sacramento