MEMORANDUM

DATE: June 30, 2020
TO: All Clergy, Religious, Seminarians, Principals, Religious Education Directors and Diocesan Staff
FROM: Bishop Oscar A. Solis
WHAT: Diocesan Strategic Plan

Navigating the Pastoral Plan under the Pandemic Crisis

The Diocese of Salt Lake City welcomes with joy and thanksgiving the limited resumption of public worship, especially being able to celebrate the Holy Mass as a faith community physically present even in a limited social-distancing manner that is still required. For several months, the pandemic has disrupted every facet of people’s lives and even the mission of our Church. Government recommendations put on hold on celebrations of community worship, parish ministries, gatherings, programs and events to help prevent the spread of a deadly disease and to save lives.

I am grateful to our lay faithful for their understanding and patience, as well as to my brother priests, for their continued support, collaboration and cooperation during these challenging and uncertain times. Some restrictions have eased and brought back a sense of normalcy, but the danger of this pandemic to the life and health of every individual persists affecting our communities, nation and the world. There are many uncertainties in the coming months with the real possibility predication of a resurgence of infection and consequent loss of many more lives.

Scientists concur that the coronavirus remains a real great threat to humanity, until a vaccine or antidote is discovered and made available. For this reason, we must continue to exercise abundant caution and vigilance to protect the sanctity of life and dignity of every person, and safeguard the health of everyone especially the poor, the sick, the elderly, those who have compromised health conditions, as well as our clergy and ministers.

The mission of the Church and our diocese in particular face a great challenge of navigating unchartered waters and no one knows exactly what lies ahead of us with this pandemic. One thing for sure, our lives, ministry and the world will be different. The critical issue is how we will be able to pursue and sustain the mission of our Church under this “new normal” of social distancing, sanitary practices, changes, other limitations as well as anticipated financial shortfall.

In the midst of uncertainties, Pope Francis calls for a civilization of hope that rejects fear and discouragement and a world that believes and trusts in the love and mercy of God. People of faith and hope, we see challenges as opportunities for growth. We can define our identity as God’s faithful people and our Diocese as a community of faith when we move our Church forward during these difficult and trying times. God has blessed us with our Diocesan Pastoral Plan to help our local church navigate the turbulent waters with confidence believing that God is with us in our boat.
Please find a compilation of information as part of diocesan strategy in carrying out the mission of the Church during this time of crisis – pastoral guidelines, planning and preparation checklist and financial viability plan. These were the result of a series of consultations with the Senior Staff, diocesan directors and lay leaders, Consultors, members of the Finance Council, Deans and Council of Priests. I am grateful for their thoughts, comments and recommendations. Please adapt these as best as you can in light of our Diocesan Pastoral Plan.

Let us continue the mission of our local church entrusted to us by Christ by pulling ourselves together, joining our hearts in a spirit of unity and solidarity and joyfully accompanying the people of God in their faith renewal during this pandemic crisis. Through the intercession of our Blessed Mother, may our Lord and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit be with us and guide us.

**Diocesan Strategic Plan - Fiscal Year 2020-2021**

I. RESUMPTION OF PUBLIC WORSHIP / GATHERINGS

The resumption of public worship, especially the Holy Mass, is a source of great joy and hope for our parish communities. This does not mean simply going back to the same practices we had before. The protection of life, health and safety of our parishioners and the wellbeing of the community, ministers, and priests must be paramount. Our churches should be ready to welcome back the parishioners for public prayer or worship with defined guidelines and satisfactory plans put in place. Necessary practical adjustments and other changes in the way we gather and move forward should not in any way compromise the integrity of the liturgy and our community spirit as we encourage active participation, and the prayerful and joyful celebration of worship. Be patient, go slowly and safely as we transition to the new normal. Your perseverance and self-sacrifice will be appreciated as we navigate this stormy weather together, riding in the same boat with confidence that Jesus our Lord is with us.

A. Protection of Life and Health of the Faithful and Ministers
   - Planning to carry out the mission of Christ and the ministries of the Church must always give first priority to the protection of the sanctity of life in all ages and stages, and safeguard the health and the safety of the people, the priests and ministers as well as promote the common good.

B. Government Measures and Diocesan Directives such as social distancing, wearing masks, sanitizing, limiting number of people gathering
   - Observing these directives assures that we provide the People of God the utmost care and concern for their well-being. It is always more prudent to be on the safer side following the given directives than putting the community and our Church at risk and creating greater possibilities of liability.

1. GENERAL PROVISIONS

   **Holy Mass**
   - Dispensation from the Sunday obligation to attend Mass is granted to all the faithful during this crisis
• Anyone who is older than 65 years of age (the recommended CDC age), with a compromised health condition and/or caring for the sick in any way, are at higher risk of contracting COVID-19 and should stay home.

• Although the faithful are dispensed from their Sunday obligation to attend Mass, they are strongly encouraged to participate in a live-streamed or televised Mass and make a spiritual communion. It is important to keep holy the Lord’s Day in some intentional way – spending time in prayer, reading the Sacred Scriptures, meditating on the Lord’s suffering, death and resurrection, reciting the rosary or participating in a spiritual or corporal work of mercy.

• Frequency of Masses: In accord with canon 905§2, because pastoral necessity may require it, all priests in the Diocese of Salt Lake City are permitted to celebrate the Eucharist twice on weekdays and three times on Sundays and holy days of obligation. The Saturday vigil Mass does not count towards the limit of Masses celebrated on Sunday. Should any additional Masses be necessary, (such as a fourth Mass on Sunday) priests will need to seek permission of the Bishop.

• Live streaming Masses should continue during this phase.

• Careful consideration should be given to the number of priests and other liturgical ministers who can be safely accommodated in the sanctuary, allowing for physical distancing and ease of movement.

• The sanctuary area should be arranged in such a way that those exercising a liturgical role can do so while respecting the required physical distance.

• Concelebration should be limited and concelebrants should receive Communion under both kinds, using separate chalices.

• Parishes should have designated places for Lectors and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion.

• In the interest of physical distancing, for the time being limit music ministry to a single cantor and a single instrumentalist (or no more than 4 member choir).

• Altar servers should assist, always observing all physical distancing/hygiene and with careful supervision.

• Simple Entrance and Recessional procession format is recommended.

• No Offertory Procession; gifts of bread and wine should be brought from a credence table near the altar, with the water bowl and finger towel.

• Use covered ciborium/ciboria to avoid contamination of the hosts. Consecrate at each Mass a sufficient number of hosts for that celebration only.

• The procession for people approaching for Holy Communion should be carefully planned. Ministers may assist if required.

• Communion should not be given under both kinds, and should be received in the hand.
• Priests and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion should visibly sanitize their hands both before and after the distribution of Communion.

• Priests and ministers should wear a face-covering while distributing Communion.

• Thoroughly clean all vessels; change purificators and finger towels after each Mass.

2. Planning and Preparation Checklist

We thank God that we can resume the celebration of public worship even in a limited way for now. Some of the faithful will react negatively to the new and unusual practices that had to be instituted, such as social distancing, limited number in the congregation, avoidance of socializing or congregating, as well as ritual changes like the suspension of shaking hands during the sign of peace, no distribution of the Precious Blood, and the reception of Holy Communion only in the hand. However, these measures will help prevent the spread of the disease in order to protect life and safeguard the health of everyone.

It will be challenging to bring back the faithful after home confinement and isolation for some time and help them participate in the community gathering with these newly imposed directives, uncertainties, fear of possible infection and a different Church setting with new practices. Here are a few recommendations that might help and encourage parishioners as they come back to Church.

a. Prepare and extend a welcoming environment to pave the way for their return, restore their sense of belonging and foster their continued participation in the life of their faith community.

b. Re-establish and restore their connection with the parish church where their spiritual needs are met and nurtured with vibrant and uplifting liturgies to nourish their longing for the Eucharist and the church fellowship they were accustomed to and in spite of the limitations they will experience.

c. Communicate and inform the parish community of the “NEW NORMAL” they will encounter when they come to Church for Holy Mass, celebrate other Sacraments, participate in the various ministries and attend parish gatherings.

d. Introduce and utilize digital technology and social media platforms in addition to the usual printed format such as parish bulletins in order to provide necessary information, bring awareness and educate the parish about what is available for their continued formation, enhancement of their spiritual growth and the promotion of a stronger community life.

e. Re-invite and re-engage parishioners and ministers to the life of the Church and community. Bring back to life activities and events that are effective in strengthening their faith and generating interest in their active involvement and participation.

f. Regroup parish ministers and leaders to discuss and define a plan of action to carry out the mission of the church in the parish community. Meet all ministers and leaders for consultation and set the timeframe for implementation and periodic evaluation.
g. **Jumpstart church ministries, programs, regular events and gatherings** to renew the faith life of the parishioners, build stronger community spirit and form missionary disciples of Christ.

II PUBLIC WORSHIP

Please refer to the last Memorandum defining the diocesan guidelines and practices for the celebration of the Holy Mass, Sacraments and other liturgies.

- **Basic Preparation for Public Mass or Parish Gathering**

  - Define the parish plan according to the diocesan directives

  - Communicate and inform the parishioners of the plan and directives. Always consider the needs of the people with disabilities.

  - Form and train your parish team in the implementation and evaluation of the plan to provide guidance for the faithful’s compliance when in the church.

  - Follow public health advice to reduce the risk of transmission of Covid-19 by emphasizing the importance of strict adherence to physical distancing, good hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, and regular cleaning and sanitizing of shared spaces.

  - Check the most up-to-date diocesan directives regarding physical distancing, the right number of people allowed safely in each church, sanitary practices, etc...

  - In accord with current public health recommendations, the people (except liturgical ministers in the sanctuary) must wear cloth face coverings (masks) upon entering the church until they depart. Masks will remain on their face throughout the whole Mass except for when receiving communion.

  - Provide hand sanitizer near the entrances to the church. Secure sufficient supply of disinfectant to clean the church after each service. CDC guidelines will be helpful in disinfecting the space.

  - Remove all hymnals and missalettes (and other items) from the pews and store these for the duration of the pandemic.

  - Use disposable worship aids for the faithful at each Mass and discard after each liturgy. The use of digital projection and screens is an alternative and strongly encouraged but be mindful of appropriate copyright licenses.

  - Mark seats or tape off rows for seating in the church with at least 6 feet distance from each other, except for the members of the same family. This provides an estimate or guess calculation of the number of people allowed in the church building at one time.

  - Provide information for use of restroom; limit the number of people who enter a restroom at the same time and mark the floor for people to stand in line, maintaining a 6 feet distance from each other.
- Use signage and markings wherever it will be helpful to prepare the church building and provide guidance or directions to help people to maintain physical distance, procedures entering the church and when approaching for Holy Communion.

III STEWARDSHIP and FINANCIAL CHALLENGES

The impact of the coronavirus pandemic coupled with government guidelines that shutdown businesses and financial operations have brought havoc to the global economy. Many people lost their jobs and the ability to provide for their families. The suspension of public worship prevented the faithful from attending Mass on Sundays and the opportunity to contribute their regular support of the Church with their offerings and donations. Fundraisers that provide extra assistance to generate added revenues were cancelled.

Despite all this, churches, parish offices and other ministries continued their daily operation on a limited basis, retained their ministers and workers, paid for the maintenance of parish facilities and carried out the mission of the church. However, with reduced offerings and other sources of revenue, the diocese and parishes now suffer financial challenges to support the overall mission of the Church.

It is critical that we find ways and develop strategies to strengthen the financial stability of the diocese and of the parishes to sustain the mission of the Church and the operation of all the parishes and other ministries. With severely reduced revenues and budgetary shortfalls, here are some suggestions to address and respond to these essential needs.

A. Rekindle the spirit of Christian Stewardship

1. Promote stewardship as a way of Christian life and discipleship, and encourage sacrificial giving and joyful offering to the Lord. We rely on Divine providence to attend to our divine commission and vocation to proclaim the Gospel to all people. However, we need the means to pursue the mission entrusted to us. In light of our deficiencies, help the faithful recognize the abundance of God's blessings in our lives and not forget our responsibility to offer and share our gifts no matter how small.

2. Offer various opportunities for supporting the Church.

3. Form a Parish Finance Council (if it does not already exist) for consultation and collaboration to assist pastors in maintaining a financially healthy parish that operates with a balanced budget.

4. Utilize the parish website and other social media platforms along with the weekly printed bulletin to teach, inspire and encourage parishioners to contribute.

5. Establish On-Line Giving as alternate means of giving aside from regular Sunday offerings and donation envelopes. Please call the Office of Stewardship and Development for assistance. The staff will be happy to serve you.

6. Coordinate with parish leaders and organize gatherings and fundraising events to promote stewardship and community fellowship.
7. Support the Diocesan Development Drive as it contributes a sizable percentage of our Annual Diocesan Budget, provide subsidies to our Missions, financial support to some of our poor parishes, education of our seminarians, formation of Permanent Deacons, church ministries and other apostolates.

8. Promote the Catholic Foundation of Utah and provide necessary information as to how parishioners can make donations and support their parish through endowments, trusts and bequests.

9. Most important of all, everything must be done in a spirit of prayer, with faith in the goodness of God, and hope in His unending blessings.
IV DIOCESAN FINANCIAL VIABILITY PLAN

Phase One
- Reduce Budgetary Spending
- No cost of living adjustment (COLA) or salary increase for lay employees at Pastoral Center/Chancery/CFU/Cemetery
- Freeze Hiring: Only essential employees may be replaced (exceptions by diocesan approval)
- Freeze Spending (exceptions by diocesan approval): scrutinize budget and determine other cuts to spending
- Suspend Clergy and Diocesan Staff Retreats, Convocation, continuing education, elective travel/seminars/conferences (exception by diocesan approval)
- Do not start non-essential projects unless critical to remaining open
- Reduce utility use where possible
- Do not renew subscriptions to non-essentials, e.g. magazines, disposable hymnals; promote paperless correspondence for all ministry and operations

Phase Two – Only if necessary
- Diocesan-wide Wage Reduction across the board: all employees, including priests, contracts possibly excepted
- Staff Reduction: Furloughs, layoffs
- Diocesan request to borrow from D&L Savings from one entity to help another, after normal D&L loan process is exhausted
- Diocesan Commercial Loan, after use of one million line of credit

Phase Three – Only if necessary
- Partial or full shutdown of select facilities
- Consolidation of select ministries and properties to reduce costs
- Liquidation of select Diocesan Assets / Properties
- Liquidation of temporary endowments where legal and appropriate

Phase Four – Only if necessary
- File for Bankruptcy to protect the solvency of the diocese
- Liquidation of permanent endowments as directed by the bylaws of the endowments and/or the court