News



A doctor at Common Spirit's Dignity Health California Hospital Medical Center in Los Angeles takes care of a coronavirus patient May 18, 2020. The Los Angeles Archdiocese announced updates July 13 for liturgical celebrations at Catholic parishes amid new California state guidelines aimed at curbing the latest spike in confirmed cases of the coronavirus. (CNS/Reuters/Lucy Nicholson)

by Catholic News Service

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In keeping with new directives from the state of California to stop the spike in confirmed cases of the coronavirus, the Archdiocese of Los Angeles announced July 13 it will discontinue indoor Masses and other liturgical services, effective immediately.

"Outdoor Masses and other liturgical services such as adoration and prayer services are allowed and encouraged," an archdiocesan news release said. "Parishes may continue to celebrate confessions, first Communions, confirmations, funerals and weddings outdoors on the parish grounds."

"All parishioners and visitors must wear face coverings and practice social distancing, even outdoors," it added.

The three counties that make up the Los Angeles Archdiocese — Los Angeles, Ventura, and Santa Barbara — are among the 30 counties that must close indoor operations of restaurants, wineries, tasting rooms, movie theaters, family entertainment centers, zoos, museums, card rooms and all bars, California Gov. Gavin Newsom said in a July 13 directive.

These 30 counties, which account for 80% of the state's population, also are required to close indoor operations of fitness centers, places of worship, offices for noncritical sectors, personal hair services, and indoor malls.

Angelus, the online news outlet of the Los Angeles Archdiocese reported that "an email sent Monday night (July 13) to parish pastors in Los Angeles, Ventura, and Santa Barbara counties ... called the restrictions 'discouraging and disappointing' but also mentioned the importance of public safety."

"Parishes in the archdiocese had just begun to reopen to the public following a phased reopening plan last month after being closed for more than two months due to the coronavirus pandemic," the Angelus story said. "Those guidelines required that parishes take several safety and sanitary precautions, including capacity limits of 100 people per service."

The archdiocesan news release also noted that Newsom's directives include closures of parish offices to the public.

"Pastors may allow a minimal number of essential parish staff members to continue working in the office provided that social distancing is observed. Parishes have continued to serve their communities providing Masses online and much need social services, such as food pantries and hot meal distributions, to communities in need."

According to a July 14 USA Today story, almost half of all states "are spiking at a faster rate than they were in the spring": Alaska, Arizona, California, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Missouri, Montana, Nevada, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Utah, West Virginia and Wyoming.

On July 1, Bishop Edward J. Weisenburger of Tucson, Arizona, announced that because of the spike in cases. "our parishes will no longer be open to the public."

"My hope is that this suspension will be brief, but we owe it to our health care workers — along with the most vulnerable among us — to take this temporary step," Weisenburger explained. "At this time we're returning to the protocols we were following just prior to the reopening of our parishes."

According to Johns Hopkins University, the U.S. as of July 14 has surpassed 3.3 million cases with over 136,000 deaths. Globally, there have been 13.1 million cases and over 574,000 deaths.

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