FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:  CONTACT (401) 278-4600
May 20, 2020

Diocese of Providence Releases Guidelines for Return to Public Worship

(PROVIDENCE, R.I.) After several weeks of careful consultation with the Governor’s office and the Rhode Island Department of Health, the Roman Catholic Diocese of Providence has issued guidelines to parishes for the return to public worship amid the coronavirus pandemic. The directives draw heavily from those published by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. Public Masses will resume in the Diocese on May 30, 2020, the Vigil of the Solemnity of Pentecost.

“The re-opening of our churches for public worship, even with the necessary restrictions, is a moment of grace for all of us,” said Bishop Thomas J. Tobin. “Our priority is to do all that we reasonably can to protect the health of our people, priests, and liturgical ministers while also providing the salvific grace of the Holy Mass and the sacraments which, for believers, is indeed an essential service, allowing us to share in the life of Christ and opening for us the doors of eternal life,” said Bishop Tobin.

Resuming the public celebration of Mass will look differently than before, given the recommendations of health experts. The Diocese has highlighted ten guidelines for parishes to resume public worship. Bishop Tobin continues to dispense Catholics from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass and Holy Days until further notice. Vulnerable populations, the elderly, and those with underlying health conditions are asked to follow the most up to date health regulations and guidelines and remain home. Other guidelines include:

- Parishioners will be expected to sanitize their hands immediately upon entering churches
- Masks must be worn at all times with the exception of receiving Holy Communion
- Singing will be limited
- Pews will be sectioned off to maintain six feet distance between parishioners
- Churches will be sanitized after every Mass

All public Masses and liturgical services in the Diocese of Providence were suspended by Bishop Tobin on March 17 upon the recommendation of state and federal health experts although many churches remained open at specific times for personal prayer and/or confession in accordance with social distancing directives.

To view the complete set of returning to public worship guidelines, visit our website at https://www.dioceseofprovidence.org/resuming-public-worship.