



For Immediate Release  
June 14, 2020

Contact: John Andrews  
(909) 255-4865

## **Diocese reopens churches for Mass**

SAN BERNARDINO – "Let us come back to the Feast now."

The words of Father Duong Nguyen, SVD, to the faithful at Holy Rosary Cathedral during Morning Mass on June 14 captured the feeling at churches throughout the Diocese as public Masses resumed.

In all, 68 of the 93 parishes in the Diocese opened their churches for Mass. To do so they had to sign off on a series of stringent diocesan requirements reflecting ongoing social distancing and public health directives related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Among the most notable, no more than 100 people or 25 percent of church capacity (whichever is less) was allowed at each Mass. Parishioners were required to wear a face mask, and most churches required that every other pew was left empty. Each church was to receive a thorough cleaning between each Mass.

Because of attendance restrictions, many parishes, including Holy Rosary, offered online registration for those wishing to have a guaranteed seat. Some Masses still had room for "walk in" parishioners who had not registered.

While the Masses had a different look, most who attended were overjoyed and emotional to return to church after three months away. It was a special occasion, indeed, occurring on the Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ.

"It was kind of like Christmas Day. I even put on heels," said Holy Rosary parishioner Olivia Guerrero. "It was a beautiful experience. No one could see me smiling because of my mask."

Said parishioner Chris Doubet, "I'm glad to be able to come in and pray and listen to the sermon."

The highpoint for many was receiving the Eucharist after a painful period of spiritual hunger. Parishioners were asked to apply hand sanitizer before receiving the host and to keep on their face mask until consuming it.

"It was emotional for me to receive the body of Christ," said Roseann Segura. "Being on my knees here and praying for everyone."

In his homily, Fr. Nguyen, the Rector of Our Lady of the Rosary, encouraged the faithful to view the recent period of absence as an invitation to gratitude.

"We've been living in a difficult time. We've been deprived of some of the things that are essential to us," he said. "We may ask ourselves what the Eucharist means to us. We may appreciate being able to receive the Eucharist now more than before."

Guerrero said she understood Fr. Nguyen's point. "You don't know what you've missed until you don't have it anymore."

Fr. Nguyen encouraged parishioners to add a prayer of thanksgiving to God in the coming week for being able to return to Mass and receive the Eucharist.

Those who are over 65, have an underlying health condition, or are not yet comfortable being in public were encouraged to remain at home and watch their parish livestream of Mass. Bishop Gerald Barnes has kept in place the dispensation from attending Mass weekly for the people of the Diocese.

#####