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### **California Bishops Urge Responsible Guidelines for Indoor Worship**

Despite several recent U.S. Supreme Court and 9<sup>th</sup> Circuit rulings questioning the constitutionality of restrictions on indoor worship in churches, California remains the only state in the Union that does not allow some reasonable accommodation for people to worship inside.

The California Catholic Conference of Bishops is disappointed that California continues to treat retail and other sectors more favorably than religious services. The Bishops support state and local public health officials as they work for the proper balance of policies to fight this intense pandemic but restrictions on indoor worship remain despite the fact that parishes and congregations have repeatedly demonstrated effective safety measures to prevent the spread of the virus.

While we will continue outdoor religious services across the state and particularly in the hardest impacted communities, as the weather grows colder that arrangement grows increasingly difficult for people of all faiths. Effective guidelines, with reasonable capacity limits based on existing occupancy regulations, will respect the religious freedom of individuals without jeopardizing public safety.

We urge state and local officials to develop a plan that will allow responsible faith groups, using safe practices, to hold indoor religious services during the winter months. We know how to make our worship safe and we urge public health officials to enter into a substantive conversation on allowing safe indoor services for Californians.

We have, and will continue, to voice our concerns to the Governor, especially surrounding the injustice of California being alone in failing to accommodate faith communities with a safe indoor worship option, particularly in weather impacted communities. Efforts at an ongoing dialogue with the Governor's office on how to hold indoor services while protecting public health have not been successful.

As we approach Christmas and other year-end holidays, the essential act of worship will console and strengthen a pandemic-weary people.

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