

General Guidelines

Five Things of which to be mindful

A general dispensation from the Sunday obligation will remain. The dispensation for the obligation to attend Mass will remain in effect. Because of this, the live-streaming of Masses will continue for those who are not able to attend at their churches/parish.

Attendance will be limited. The maximum capacity of each church is reduced to 30% fire code capacity, or fewer if required to ensure physical distancing.

Physical Distancing must be consistently practiced. Expect that your parish church will have pews/rows that are sectioned off, and that family groups and individuals will be asked to keep at least two meters (six feet) distance from each other. Wear a mask to Mass to guard against germ spread. Anyone presenting symptoms of illness or who have travelled out of country in the past 14 days are directed to stay home.

Liturgical changes will be in place. Similar to protocols established when churches were closing, extra precautions will be taken. Temporary adjustments will be made with respect to how we celebrate Mass and receive Holy Communion.

There still will be a risk for anyone who attends a public Mass. Even with best health practices and strict physical distancing, anyone who enters a public space should recognize there is a risk of contracting the coronavirus. Improved cleaning will occur in our churches, but no one should expect that they will be any safer from germs than in other public spaces.

Attendance

- The dispensation of the faithful from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass remains in place until decreed otherwise by the Bishop. No one is obliged to attend Holy Mass while this dispensation is in effect.
- Priests from demographic groups that are at a greater risk of serious illness, such as those 65 years of age or older or who are living with chronic medical conditions, must meet with the Chancellor to discuss their health and wellbeing and their capacity to serve.
- Attendees and volunteers from demographic groups that are at a greater risk of serious illness, such as people 65 years of age or older and individuals with chronic medical conditions, are encouraged to stay safe by avoiding public gatherings, but are not prohibited from attending Mass if they so choose.
- Anyone attending Mass does so at their own risk.
- All attendees are expected to wear non-medical masks and should bring their own masks, unless there are infants or have repertory health issues.
- Anyone who has even the slightest symptoms or feelings of sickness must remain home.
- Note: The maximum number allowed includes the priest, liturgical ministers, livestream videographers (if applicable), ushers, the cleaning team and anyone else present during Mass. For this reason, the total number of ministers/volunteers should be reduced to a bare minimum.
- Each parish will determine the manner by which parishioners can pre-register for a particular Mass, in accordance with the principle of equity. If a parish has insufficient human resources to implement a system of pre-registration, a first-come, first-served approach may be adopted.

- Separate points of entry and exit must be clearly designated with proper signage.
- The faithful are encouraged to limit their attendance to their regular parish church to avoid undue pressure on other parishes and to exercise charity and fairness to parishioners.
- All attendees must be directed to the pews to manage seating and monitor occupancy.
- Infants and children should remain with their parents or guardians at all times.

Safety

- Physical distancing of 6 feet or 2 metres must be maintained at all times and in all directions between people who are not from the same household.
- Seating is to be arranged and designated so as to assure 6 feet/2 metres physical distancing in all directions between congregants. Available seating should be clearly marked. Unoccupied "spacer" pews are to be marked or roped off for the purpose of physical distancing.
- Staff, volunteers, and the congregation should use the self-assessment tool before attending Mass. If they have any symptoms, such as cough, fever, shortness of breath, runny nose, or sore throat, they must stay home.
- All staff and volunteers are required to wear non-medical masks at all times.
- All who attend must observe proper hand hygiene from the point of entry, while inside, and upon exiting the church.
- Hand sanitizing stations are to be available by the doors and at several locations in the church.
- Hand washing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds is also strongly encouraged in washroom facilities.
- Proper signage indicating these and other protocols must be in place to direct all occupants.
- Reduction of contact with high-touch/shared surfaces shall be facilitated by leaving general entry/exit ways barrier-free.

When to Employ Gloves and Masks

- Anyone stationed in an entranceway, where there will be a great number of people passing, should wear disposable gloves and a mask.
- Persons cleaning any facilities or handling altar cloths or replenishing votive candles or poor boxes should wear disposable gloves.

Designated Entrances and Exits

- Churches shall designate one point of entry in order to control the number of people entering. Once the maximum is reached, no one else will be allowed entry.
- Doors are to be locked until 30 minutes before Mass begins and shall remain locked throughout the duration of the Mass.
- Entrance doors should be propped open before Mass as people enter so the faithful do not need to touch the handles or doors to enter. They can be closed and locked when Mass begins.
- All public doors have code-compliant panic bar functionality for emergency exiting. If emergency services are needed during the Mass, all doors must be propped open for emergency personnel.
- At the end of Mass, exits are to be designated to expedite the guided departure and minimize chances of people encountering one another. In all cases, physical distancing must be observed.

- Exit doors should be propped open after the Mass to allow the faithful to exit without touching the doors or handles.
- From an area in the nave where he is easily visible to the assembly, such as the sanctuary, the priest celebrant is to direct the orderly exit of the faithful.
- Priests are to refrain from greeting the faithful after the Mass so as not to impede or delay the orderly and rapid departure of the faithful.

Volunteer Teams

- The standard procedure for screening and training of ministers and volunteers under the Diocesan safe environment program applies to all who will be involved in any paid or volunteer capacity.
- The parish shall maintain an up-to-date contact list for all staff and volunteers, including names, addresses and phone numbers.

SAFETY COORDINATORS

- Safety Coordinators will work closely with the pastor in conducting an overall assessment of the church facility, reviewing the implementation of the internal guidelines and identifying potential issues and the necessary preventative measures that will need to be adapted for the parish.
- A safety coordinator will be assigned for each Mass to assist the pastor in coordinating volunteers, in maintaining order and security, and in responding to emerging needs.

USHERS

- Ushers must direct attendees to the available space in the pews in order to ensure proper physical distancing between households, manage seating, and monitor occupancy.
- Ushers are to facilitate the egress or departure of the faithful as directed by the priest.

CLEANING AND DISINFECTING TEAM DUTIES

- Wipe surfaces with a cleaning agent to clean off soil and wipe again with a disinfectant.
- Clean and disinfect pews in between Masses.
- Implement procedures for increased frequency of cleaning and disinfecting of high traffic areas, common areas, and public washrooms.
- Disinfect high-touch/shared surfaces such as: doorknobs, light switches, toilet handles, faucets and taps, elevator buttons, railings
- public phones, computers (if used for tracking attendance), surface counters, equipment handles
- Regular household cleaning and disinfecting products are effective against COVI D-19 when used according to the directions on the label.
- Use a disinfectant that has a Drug Identification Number (DIN) and a virucidal claim (efficacy against viruses).
- Alternatively, use a bleach-water solution with 100 ml of bleach to 900 ml water.
- Health Canada has approved several hard-surface disinfectants and hand sanitizers for use against COVI D-19. Use these lists to look up the DIN number of the product you are using or to find an approved product.
- Make sure to follow instructions on the product label to disinfect effectively

- Disposable towels and spray cleaners, or disposable wipes, should be available to staff, volunteers and (as necessary) parishioners to regularly clean commonly used surfaces.
- Remove all communal items that cannot be easily cleaned, such as hymnals, donation envelopes, pencils, newspapers, magazines, and stuffed toys.

Social Gatherings

- All social gatherings are prohibited in the churches.
- Social visits and contact between people of different households such as hand-shaking or the sharing of communal items are not allowed.
- Social visits outside the church may take place provided that proper physical distancing is observed and that these take place away from high-traffic areas such as the designated entrances and exits and driveways.

Practical Considerations

- An adequate stock of hand sanitizer and other cleaning supplies must be available at all times.
- Proper and sufficient communication should be provided to the parishioners.
- Proper signage is to be placed in highly visible areas of the church to provide hospitality to all attendees.
- Mass schedules should be posted on the exterior of church doors.
- With the variation in the sizes of restrooms in churches, usage and cleaning policies must be developed by each parish.

General Directives

- The scheduling of Sunday Masses should take into account the amount of time necessary in between Masses for the volunteer shift change and information-sharing, the cleaning and disinfecting of the pews and of the sacred vessels used, and other necessary preparatory work.
- Sacred vessels should be purified and washed with soap and hot water after the Mass. The priest or a deacon may wish to do this so as to ensure physical distancing and avoiding unnecessary contact with other people. This also reduces the need for sacristans and Eucharistic Ministers in the sacristy.
- Congregational singing is a high-risk activity and is not allowed during initial phases. Infected people can transmit the virus through their saliva or respiratory droplets while singing or chanting. This prohibition in Stage 1 includes singing by a cantor or a soloist.
- Entrance and recessional processions are to be omitted and the priest celebrant could enter directly from the sacristy.
- Only one lector will be involved and will be asked to proclaim all the readings.
- There will be no altar servers required so as to minimize the risk of exposure and to properly maintain physical distancing at all times.
- The chalice, paten, ciborium, cruets, and lavabo, are to be placed on a small credence table next to the altar for easy access by the priest.
- The priest celebrant will not be wearing a non-medical mask during the Liturgy of the Eucharist; therefore, all ciboria must be covered with palls at all times. He will be required to wear one during the distribution of Holy Communion. See Appendix I on how to properly

wear and remove masks.

- No presentation of the gifts is to be made. At the time of the preparation of the altar, the hosts for consecration to be consumed by the faithful should be placed on a separate corporal slightly to the side of the priest on the altar, covered with a pall.
- No collection is taken during the Mass. Instead, baskets are placed near the entrance or at an accessible and monitored location within the church. Secure vigilance over the donations is to be assured.
- There is to be no Sign of Peace.
- There is to be no holy water in fonts.
- The Liturgy of the Word for children during Masses is not permitted.
- All hymnals, missalettes, pew cards, pencils, donation envelopes, and other loose items in the pews must be removed.
- Parish bulletins may be made available in Stage 1 only online.
- The requests for the celebration of the Sacrament of Penance may increase with the reintroduction of Mass celebrated with a congregation. See Summary of Directives for Sacraments and Liturgies.

Distribution of Holy Communion

- The individual attestation at the moment of distribution of Holy Communion ("The Body of Christ, R: Amen") is eliminated; instead one general pronouncement ("The Body of Christ") is to be made by the priest, and one general response ("Amen") is to be made by all congregants together before the distribution begins. Then each person who wishes to receive the Blessed Sacrament comes forward in procession and receives in silence.
- The priest must wear a non-medical mask during the distribution of Holy Communion, as must the communicants.
- The Precious Blood will not be distributed at this time.
- Holy Communion may only be received in the hand. A small table will be placed next to the priest, on which is to be placed a corporal and a bottle of sanitizer. If, during Holy Communion, a priest feels that his hand has touched the hands of a communicant, he must immediately pause, place the ciborium on the corporal, sanitize his hands, and then continue to distribute the Eucharist.
- Acknowledging that receiving Communion on the tongue is a right of all the faithful (Redemptionis Sacramentum, n. 92), nevertheless ecclesiastical authority is to regulate rights in view of the common good (can. 223, §2). In the present circumstances, Communion will not be distributed on the tongue. This is a temporary measure to be reviewed on an on-going basis in the light of developing medical advice.
- Physical distancing must be maintained during the Communion procession. There can be only one single file Communion line. Members of the same household need not observe physical distancing with one another during the Communion procession.
- Only the minimum will distribute Communion to reduce the number of ministers.
- If a priest has underlying health conditions or is otherwise unable, he may choose to have a deacon or an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion distribute in his place (cf. Ecclesia de Mysterio 8.2). The number of deacons and Extraordinary Ministers shall be limited to those who are properly trained in these protocols and Diocesan safe environment measures, and not be from a high-risk or vulnerable age group.
- Ministers of Holy Communion must sanitize their hands immediately after receiving Holy Communion before distributing Holy Communion to the faithful. They must also sanitize their hands after the distribution.