

General Principles to Reduce Risks

Pastors and other ministers should apply these principles to their situations and circumstances. For more details, see the resources on the [CDC Website](#).

Once permission is given to re-open the church, the parish must prepare for it by determining that:

1. The parish staff, volunteers and parishioners are ready, and the necessary materials are on hand.
2. They have cleaned and disinfected the church; aired the building; flushed the water system by opening the taps; and checked the utilities (see [CDC](#) guidelines).
3. If the county in which the parish is situated experiences a flare up of cases, the pastor, at his discretion, may delay the re-opening of the church for public worship or may temporarily suspend public worship.

Preparing to Resume Public Masses

- Catholics remain dispensed from the Sunday and Holy Day Obligation until further notice. Continue to livestream, record, or broadcast liturgies for those who cannot be in attendance.
- The pastor determines how best to accommodate the smaller number of attendees since seating will be limited due to the extra distancing. Preferential treatment should be avoided.
- Consider modifying the Mass schedule due to the need to disinfect between Masses. Consider adding Masses due to the revised capacity.
- Sunday Masses can only be offered beginning at 4pm on Saturday through Midnight on Sunday and cannot be offered on weekdays.
- Pastors must communicate with their parishioners about plans for resuming (or not resuming) public Masses.
- Multiple and easily accessible ways of sign-up should be employed according to the size of the parish. For example, some combination of online sign-ups, email, phone calls and written sign-ups could be used.
- A first-come, first-served system as well as *exclusively* online or email sign-up or ticketing systems (such as Eventbrite or Eventbee) should be avoided, since it excludes some parishioners.
- The pastor may need to limit the number of times individuals and families can attend Mass each month. Since the Sunday Mass obligation has been lifted, attendance on weekdays may be an option for some parishioners.
- The faithful are asked to sign-up for Mass at only one parish. Parishes are discouraged from verifying whether those who sign up are from their parish.
- Depending upon the system, sign-ups might allow the faithful to choose the Mass they prefer to attend or indicate if there are specific Mass times they cannot attend.

When Public Masses Resume

- People should stay home if they:
 - are 65 or older, have underlying medical conditions, feel unwell, or are in a high-risk occupation.
 - were possibly exposed to someone suspected to have COVID-19 within the last 14 days.
 - travelled internationally or on a cruise ship within the last 14 days.
- Small children need to be with an adult.
- Prop open doors and open windows to allow air circulation and to minimize touching door handles.
- Maintain 6' distancing. Cover coughs, wash hands, and do not touch your face. Use face protection until advised otherwise (everyone older than 2). Avoid touching common surfaces.
- Attendees supply their own face protection and bring hand sanitizer for their use.
- Hand sanitizer, tissues and receptacles are available at all entrances. Face protection is available.
- The parish must ensure proper cleaning and disinfection of the church using safe and correct application after each use. Areas can be roped off to keep proper distancing and limit the area that needs to be cleaned.
- All fonts are empty.

Use of Church Space

- Parishes should display simple and clear signs outlining safest practices (for example, proper hygiene, who should not enter the church, seating policy, the symptoms of COVID-19, etc.).
- Parishes are to limit seating to every third pew/row. Households in the same pew/row keep 6 feet apart. Aisles should be marked for one-way movement. When leaving, dismiss rows near the exit first.
- Close unused rooms, including “cry rooms.” Parish child-care during Mass is not permitted.

Ministers

- Priests at higher risk for severe COVID-19 may:
 - Choose not to preside at public liturgy. Inform the Bishop so other arrangements can be made.
 - Choose to omit greeting parishioners before or after Mass, unless perhaps outdoors.
 - Choose not to process into or out of the church. Instead, enter from the sacristy or start the liturgy from the chair.
 - Choose to omit the distribution of Communion to the faithful and assign that task to a deacon or EMHC.
- Visiting priests should minister in only one parish on a given weekend.
- A minimum number of ministers is used. Volunteers at high risk are not permitted to serve at Mass.
- Ministers need to be trained for this different situation.
- All ministers wash/sanitize their hands before and after the liturgy, and during the liturgy if handling an object in common or if their hands become contaminated. Gloves are not worn unless specifically called for.

Liturgy

- Use the shortest liturgical forms if available for the day. Keep homilies brief.
- Singing is not permitted, as this creates aerosols and droplets equivalent to coughing. Instrumental music is permitted (no woodwinds or brass). Responses are made in a quiet voice.
- There is no greeting with a handshake or hug at the sign of peace.
- Bulletins should not be distributed. Continue to use electronic communication or mailings.
- No social gathering / receptions before or after a liturgy.
- Any person who becomes ill should leave, if able to do so safely. A location away from the assembly should be set aside if possible for anyone who begins to feel ill and needs to wait for family or an ambulance. Protective equipment should be provided if needed.

After Liturgies

- Cleaning and disinfecting the church should begin no sooner than 60 minutes after the liturgy ends. The larger the church and the more limited the airflow, the later this should begin.
- All liturgical vestments are to be regularly cleaned.