



RECOMMENDATIONS AND GUIDELINES FOR THE LITURGICAL CELEBRATION IN "NEW NORMAL" CONDITION

We need the Lord - the Bread of Life - in the Holy Eucharist! The Holy Eucharist is central and essential to the life of the Church and to the life of each individual believer. It is in this context that we understand our people's desire to return to the parishes, participate in the liturgy, and receive the Eucharist, which up to now we are not able to do because of the current restrictions to address the coronavirus pandemic.

However, we tell ourselves that when the time comes and we are able to gather and celebrate the Eucharist, we will approach this next phase, in the context of the pandemic, with prudence, patience and loving and charitable mindset.

We offer you then some guidelines in view of the possibility, in the gradual return to the new normal that we will be allowed to celebrate the Sacraments with the people in attendance, especially the Holy Eucharist.

The main content of these guidelines was drawn up by Fr. Genaro Diwa, Executive Secretary of our CBCP Episcopal Commission on Liturgy. We thank him for his patience and kind assistance.

During the days of the suspension of the public celebration of Masses, our parishes have creatively continued to minister and accompany our faithful as they journey through this COVID-19 crisis. These creative ways prove our pastoral sense and love for our flock.

There are two ways, which have emerged and become effective ministerial channels during the ECQ:

1. **The Use of Social Media: Liturgy Livestreamed and Televised.** The social distancing so needed to stem the spread of the virus has taught all of us to maximize the potentials of the Social Media. Through this particular form of communication, our Sunday, Holy Week and daily Masses, spiritual conferences and preaching have reached many of our faithful as well as our young people. This has become a powerful tool for evangelization and catechesis. Social media has brought us together in spite of the social distancing we imposed on ourselves.

Liturgy with the Faithful in Attendance. A good and clear understanding, however, must be taught between virtual participation and the full participation of the people in our liturgical celebrations. Pope Francis reminded us: “The Church, the sacraments and the people of God are concrete. The virtual participation of the liturgy cannot be the “status quo”. “This is the Church in difficult situation that the Lord is allowing, but the ideal of the Church is always with people and with the sacraments.”

2. **The Rediscovery of the Domestic (Family) Church.** During the ECQ, families have come together to pray. This is the foundation of our Church’s life and growth. We grow in genuine prayer with the Church because we have learned and have been taught to pray with our family.

We are eagerly awaiting the possibility of resuming public Masses, and when the time comes, we offer these following recommendations:

A. Mass and Adaptations

1. **The Elderly and the Sick, the Young and the Children:** We urge the elderly and the sick, the young and the children to stay home and not to attend Mass. Every parish needs to take extra precaution that our elderly and the sick will not be exposed to occasions for the infection of the virus. It is advisable that they be dispensed from the

obligation to attend Mass during this time when the vaccine is not yet available and the threat of the virus is still widespread.

The IATF-EID clearly mandates that under GCQ:

"Any person below twenty-one (21) years old, those who are sixty (60) years old and above, those with immunodeficiency, comorbidities, or other health risks, and pregnant women, including any person who resides with the aforementioned, shall be required to remain in their residences at all times, except when indispensable under the circumstances for obtaining essential goods and services or for work in permitted industries and offices."
[Section 2, No. 3]

There are also those who are taking serious caution not to be contaminated by the virus and therefore avoid gatherings of people even in Church.

As circumstances allow, a visit from a priest, a deacon or extraordinary minister of Holy Communion to bring them the Eucharist is highly recommended.

- 2. The Use of Social Media.** It is still strongly recommended to continue to livestream or televise our Masses, especially for the abovementioned people in no. 1.

As we maximize the use of social media in this regard, we are also reminded to observe the proper way of celebrating the Holy Mass. Those who prepare for this need to follow the General Instructions of the Roman Missal. The special character of the Holy Mass, our highest form of prayer as Catholics, is compromised by mindless and arbitrary accommodations inserted into the celebration, oftentimes foreign or contrary to the nature of the Eucharist. The celebration of the Holy Mass, televised or livestreamed, is seen not only by Catholics but also by non-Catholics.

3. **Priests and Lay Ministers** who take part and assist in the celebrations:

- a. Should wash and sanitize their hands properly before and after each celebration.
- b. Should wear face masks when they are not to speak to lead in prayer, give instructions or proclaim the Word of God to the assembly. But the priest celebrant should not wear masks or globes during the celebration of the Mass. Instead, he should remain more than 1 meter from the congregation during the Mass. In such circumstances, there is no substantial risk of infection.
- c. Should practice social distancing in the sanctuary. Therefore, only a minimal number of altar servers and lectors need to be in the sanctuary.
- d. The number of choir members who will sing during the celebrations need to be reduced in order to keep social distancing. It may even be advisable to have only a cantor who will lead the assembly in the singing.

4. **The faithful attending the Mass should all wear face masks.**

5. **Markers on Pews.** Put markers on the benches/pews inside our churches to indicate where the faithful could go and sit while inside the church. These markers will help strictly observe social distancing.

6. **Anticipated Masses.** The anticipated or vigil Mass shall be reckoned beginning any time after 12 noon on Saturday; a faithful who attends any Mass after midday of Saturday shall be in fulfilment of Sunday obligation (cf. Raymond Browne, *Letter & Spirit* (1995), 702, Commentary on *CIC* Canon 1248, §1); all evening Masses from Wednesday to Friday, using Sunday Liturgy, may be deemed anticipated Sunday Mass satisfying the Sunday obligation therefor (cf. *CIC* Canon

85, i.e. merely ecclesiastical law in a particular case can be granted with dispensation).

The new schedule of Masses should be circulated well.

7. Entrances and Exits. Specific entrances and exits of the church could be planned and well indicated to help maintain social distancing during the entrance and departure of Mass goers. Station ushers at entrances of the church to help “direct traffic”, to ensure that the faithful keep 1 meter from each other while entering and exiting the Church.

- a. **Thermal scanners** are to be used for temperature check. Ushers will handle this at the entrances of the church (This is a requirement of the DOH).
- b. **Foot baths** [1:10 bleach solution; 1 liter bleach mixed with 9 liters of clean water] are to be set up in all entrances of the church (This is a requirement of the DOH).
- c. **Hand sanitizers** should be made available at the entrances of the church. See and note on this in the next section.

8. “Ushers and Collectors” will have to be retrained to equip them to guide the assembly how to sanitize [**this presumes that hand sanitizers are provided**] before they enter the church, where to sit in the church, when to come to the communion line during Holy Communion, and when and where to enter and to exit the church.

9. Offertory and Preparation of the Gifts. The Offertory procession (presentation of the gifts) should be omitted.

A deacon (if present) or a server may bring the missal, chalice, paten/ciborium, and cruets of wine and water to the altar, while the priest remains at the chair. (Alternatively, the priest could do this

himself.) After the deacon or servers move away, the priest could come to the altar and arrange the items on the altar.

The lavabo should be done by the priest alone, without assistance, at the credence table near the altar.

Special provision should be made for the collection. Baskets should not be passed from person to person. Long-handled baskets could be acceptable if the ushers can remain at a suitable distance from others. There can also be designated boxes or collection points where the faithful can place their contributions.

If hosts for the communion of the faithful are to be consecrated, they should be placed on a second corporal on the side of the altar. This allows the priest to say the words of consecration directly over the host that he will consume, while the other hosts on the altar are not directly in front of the priest as he speaks the Eucharistic Prayer.

10. Holy Communion will still be distributed only on the hand.

The ministers of Holy Communion (both priests and lay ministers) need to wear face masks and sanitize their hands before and after the distribution of Holy Communion. In areas where the faithful might stand in line to receive Holy Communion, place tape on the floor, to indicate proper spacing between persons. The faithful are also lead to the line by pews.

11. Sign of Peace and The Our Father. No holding of hands during the singing/praying of the “Our Father” and shaking of hands during the Sign of Peace (CBCP Circular No. 20-05, dated January 29, 2020).

12. We need to train younger Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion. Many of our EMHCs are elderly and therefore are the ones vulnerable to the virus. Care is to be exercised in this regard not to expose them to the infection of the virus.

13. Holy Communion Outside Mass. Parishes should also distribute Holy Communion outside of the Mass for the sick and those who are taking serious caution not to be contaminated by the virus and therefore avoid gatherings of people even in Church. This is again in reference to people mentioned in no. 1 of this section.

14. Regular General Disinfection should be done for the entire place of worship. City or Municipal Governments may possibly assist us on this.

B. Baptisms

1. The celebration of Baptism is allowed but restricted to the immediate family members and to one or a pair of godparents. They need to wear face masks and observe social distancing.
2. The baptismal water to be used should be clean and blessed for that celebration.
3. The Holy Oils should be applied, using cotton, on the one baptized. The cotton with holy oils should be burned after the celebration.

C. Sacrament of Confirmation

We can forego mass confirmations this year. Those who are to be baptized as adults or who are getting married can be confirmed by the parish priest as church discipline dictates.

D. Celebration of Weddings

The Wedding Rites prescribed in the liturgical book have to be followed. But, due to the demand of social distancing, wedding celebrations this year will have to be simpler than the usual. We have to forego all of the secondary elements of the normal wedding ceremonies, e.g., the wedding entourage (*abays*). Only the bride and

the groom, the parents of the couple, and one set of sponsors are to be present in the ceremony.

E. Funerals

Attendance is restricted to the immediate family and all must wear face masks and all should observe social distancing.

F. Confessions

1. The sacramental nature of confession requires that it must be done in person; however, it is advisable not to use the confessionals in the church. Although confessions may be heard in the parish office, it is preferable that they be heard outdoors, where there is better circulation of air and additional space for safe distance between the confessor and the penitent.
2. When hearing confessions, the confessor always wears a face mask. The penitent also wears a face mask.
3. Priests are reminded not to hear Confessions via telephone or Zoom teleconferencing, though they may use these methods to offer the penitents spiritual counsel.
4. **Act of Perfect Contrition.** When the Sacrament of Reconciliation is not possible, for example, to a patient who is isolated or in quarantine, he/she can make an Act of Perfect Contrition. The Act of Perfect Contrition always has been a part of our Catholic tradition. God is always present to us, even when the Sacrament of Reconciliation is not possible. While a priest cannot give absolution over the phone, he can use the phone to give a blessing and even guide a person to make an Act of Perfect Contrition. This can be done provided the person expresses faith in and love of God above all things and resolves to make a sacramental Confession as soon as possible. All his/her sins, even mortal sins, are forgiven.

G. Anointing of the Sick

The recommendations we have outlined in the previous circular on the Pastoral Care of the Sick during the pandemic are relevant even during the GCQ. We refer you to the same document.

H. The “Mass in Time of Pandemic” [Recently provided by the Holy See] and the *Oratio Imperata*.

1. This Mass can be celebrated, according to the rubrics given for Masses and Prayers for Various Needs and Occasions, on any day except Solemnities, the Sundays of Advent, Lent, and Easter, days within the Octave of Easter, the Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed (All Souls’ Day), Ash Wednesday and the days of Holy Week. Please see again the communication from the Holy See regarding the text and the use of this Mass.
2. We continue to pray the *Oratio Imperata* during the Mass, after the Prayer after Communion and also every 8:00 P.M. daily.

I. May, Devotion to the Blessed Mother

Pope Francis has asked Catholics around the world to pray the Rosary, asking Mary’s intercession to stop the Covid-19 pandemic. He has offered us also two prayers that can be recited at the end of the Rosary.

Conclusion

There will no doubt be challenges and frustrations. Our parishes need to learn new ways to cope with the “new normal” after the ECQ, when we begin to celebrate the liturgy, especially the Holy Eucharist, with the faithful in attendance. But we believe that following these guidelines is a reasonable sacrifice. For the interest of the common good, and ultimately

to best serve our own community, we want to contribute to solve this crisis and soon be freed from the threat of the pandemic.

For the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Romulo G. Valles". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

+ROMULO G. VALLES

Archbishop of Davao

President, CBCP

May 16, 2020