



# CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF SUNYANI

E-mail: [cdsunyani@gmail.com](mailto:cdsunyani@gmail.com)  
Website: [www.cdsunyani.org](http://www.cdsunyani.org)

P.O. Box 450,  
Sunyani, B/A  
Ghana, West Africa  
Tel: +233-35-2027379  
Fax: +233-35-2027093

Digital Address: BS-0174-1580  
Postal Code: BS-0174

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To: All Priests and Religious  
Lay Faithful

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

## COVID-19 PROTOCOLS ADDENDUM

Receive greetings of Peace from Sunyani!

After carefully studying the Guidelines from the Ghana Catholic Bishops' Conference (GCBC) and having contacted the Senate and the Lay Representatives and Health and Legal Experts, these are our Recommendations in addition to those of the GCBC and Ministry of Chieftaincy and Religious Affairs, regarding the Resumption of Public Worship in the Catholic Diocese of Sunyani:

### 1. Dispensation from Sunday Obligation:

- a. Priests are permitted to celebrate more than two Masses.
- b. **Anticipatory Mass:** In order to have many Masses to give opportunity for many people to attend Mass, the Bishop permits priests to celebrate Anticipatory Masses on Saturday evenings.

### 2. Ministry to those who cannot attend Mass (e.g. the Sick/Aged):

- All priests should wash and sanitise hands, wear medically approved face mask, face shield and observe the one-meter social distance before and after attending to the Sick and Aged.
- The homebound should also wear mask and wash their hands.
- Priests should visit one person at a time. Priests are advised to visit a maximum of three people in a day: Preferably, one person in the morning, one in the afternoon and one in the evening.
- To avoid taking unnecessary risks, penitents especially the Sick and Aged are permitted to confess their sins inaudibly during this COVID-19 era. This

should be followed by the Act of Contrition in silence and then the Words of Absolution by the priest in silence with the sign of the cross.

**3. Preparation of Churches and Chapels:**

- a. Parishes and outstations are to take this opportunity to register parishioners for a reliable database (see attached suggested format).
- b. Those assigned to register parishioners should observe all the safety protocols.

**4. During the Liturgy:**

- a. Choir or congregational singing should be avoided. A cantor or organ-singer or recorded music should be used instead.
- b. Someone should be assigned to sanitise all equipment before they are passed on to the next user.
- c. The offertory gifts should be placed at an appropriate place near the altar or at the Sanctuary before Mass begins. Two people representing the faithful should present the gifts during offertory time.
- d. Before the distribution of Holy Communion, the Priest or Minister (Deacon, Acolyte) should say **“The Body of Christ”** once and for all. All communicants are to respond **“Amen”** and receive Holy Communion one after the other while maintaining the required distance and wearing the face masks.

**5. Other Pastoral Guidelines:**

- Societal meetings are allowed provided the necessary protocols are observed. The Parish priest should be informed at least a week ahead of such meetings. As much as possible societal meetings should be held once a month with the approval of the Parish Priest.
- Parishioners who can give offertory collection through Mobile Money Transfer are encouraged to do so.
- Children’s Masses/Services are suspended.
- Priests who are above 65 years should celebrate only one Mass or two Masses to avoid the risk of infection.
- Where there are obvious difficulties during Burial Services, the priest may say only “the prayers at home” and “the prayers at the cemetery.”
- All protocols must be observed in the administration of the Sacraments.
- Daily Masses are allowed at Parish Centers and Outstations while observing all protocols.
- Each Parish Pastoral Council should educate their congregants. The vulnerable (e.g. the Sick and Aged) should be encouraged to stay home.
- All Parish Priests and their Local Pastoral Councils should make sure these safety protocols are observed in outstations in the absence of the priest.
- The Parish Priests and their Pastoral Councils are to determine how to choose the 100 participants at worship.

**6. Date for the Parishes to start worship:**

All Parishes should prepare to begin public worship on 14<sup>th</sup> June, 2020. Those who would not be ready should continue their preparation to get the required logistics before they start.

**7. The Parish Priest and the COVID-19 taskforce at the Parish Center and Outstations should ensure that all these protocols are observed.**

My Friends, these are trying times. The virus is infectious and can be deadly. We all need to protect ourselves and others. The assembly of God's People is a place and context for spiritual and physical healing. It should not be allowed to be the medium for the transmission of the disease. This explains why we should all take the protocols extraordinarily seriously.

Together, let us give glory to God who has been good to us at all times.

Yours in the Service of the Lord,

*+ Matthew Gyamfi*

**MOST REV. MATTHEW KWASI GYAMFI**  
*Bishop of Sunyani*

CC: Diocesan Laity Office

Diocesan Women Council Office

