ARCHBISHOP’S
PASTORAL MESSAGE ON THE UPDATED MITIGATION PROTOCOLS FOR THE ARCHDIOCESE OF AGANA
FEBRUARY 09, 2021

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

With prayer and discernment, I gladly present the Archdiocese of Agaña’s updated mitigation protocols. As we continue to respond proactively to our island’s public health emergency it is important that you, the faithful, are aware of the updates and contingencies that are developed as this dynamic situation continues to affect the landscape of how, and where we worship.

I am grateful to our priests and religious who have continued to unpack these protocols so that our parish communities may be safe, and I am grateful for all of you and your continued prayers and cooperation.

My approval of these updates comes after closely monitoring the situation and with continuous input from my brother priests, the Archdiocesan Liturgical Commission (ALC) and different members of our Catholic community.

Above all, as in all things, we look to our Almighty Father for guidance as the Church and the general community to navigate these unprecedented perilous waters of the COVID-19 pandemic. With this in mind, please note that our houses of worship must continue to abide by strict COVID-19 requirements. Your pastors and dedicated parish staff and volunteers are working diligently to ensure these ongoing protocols are communicated within the parishes and schools.

I take this opportunity to note that the livestreaming of Masses and loudspeakers may still be utilized for the sake of our brothers and sisters who still opt to follow the Mass from their cars or at home. The dispensation which excuses persons from the obligation to attend Mass still stands at this time because of the pandemic. Catholics who are sick, frail or who are uncomfortable should still stay at home. Pastors who are unable to have indoor Mass for certain reasons have such a prerogative.

I thank the Faithful of our island, our clergy, and the many groups and individuals who are selflessly assisting our parishes and schools at this time. I mention with gratitude the Archdiocese of Agaña’s COVID-19 Task Force and our Liturgical Commission which have been working diligently throughout our archdiocese. We thank our government and health care professionals, most especially those courageous men and women who are caring for our sick and frail in our hospitals and clinics. God bless you.

Please stay strong in Jesus as His love for each of us is boundless.

Most Rev. Michael J. Byrnes, S.T.D.
Metropolitan Archbishop of Agaña
PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY – COVID 19 PANDEMIC
CONSOLIDATED MITIGATION PLAN 2021

COMMON PROTECTIVE MEASURES

1. Out of an abundance of caution, facilities should not be open to the public, unless an attendant is available to sanitize commonly used items/spaces regularly (ex: pews, seats, desks, toilets, doors)
   a. For churches – sanitization must take place after each use. (ex: After each Mass, after each Baptism, after each Confession, after each Counseling/Spiritual Direction session, etc.)

2. Signs should be placed at all entrances that clearly indicate what must be observed in the facility, how to stop the spread of covid-19 and how to promote everyday protective measures. These protective measures are to be observed in all facilities at all times, which include, but are not limited to the following:
   a. Temperature screening of each person entering. Fever is generally defined as 100.4°F (38°C) or greater. An attendant must be present to monitor the temperature of all who enter.
   b. For your safety and the safety of others: if you are ill, have a fever, or have a compromised immune system, please remain at home.
   c. Maintaining 6ft social distance (between individuals of different households)
      i. Each entity must remind all those on the premises of social distancing. For example: (a) when entering and exiting; (b) when lining up/standing; (c) when seated or kneeling; (d) when dropping off or picking up an item(s).
   d. Wash/sanitize hands regularly. Dispensers of alcohol-based hand sanitizers (at least 60% ethanol or 70% isopropanol) must be available at all entrances (or similar spaces). Avoid touching your face, nose, or eyes before sanitizing.
   e. Cover you coughs and sneezes.
   f. Properly wear a mask at all times, unless actively eating/drinking; receiving Holy Communion. (see CDC recommendations for more information)

3. Strictly monitor and adhere to the capacity regulations of the Archdiocese of Agaña.
   a. If indoor capacity has been reached, the parish/school/entity may provide an alternative space elsewhere on the premises for services. (For Holy Mass – the option to remain in your vehicle may still be available. Please inquire with the parish.)

4. The traditional serving of any food (na’ taotao tumano/refreshments/food distribution/“to-go” boxes is not permitted at this time.

5. A sufficient number of trash receptacles should be available on the premises. All trash should be disposed of properly after each event.
MASS & certain customary practices

DISPENSATION: Until further notice, all Catholic faithful are dispensed from the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation during this Public Health Emergency.

Masses INSIDE a church (in a hall, under a canopy, outside the doors of the church, or other similar areas), may not exceed 50% of the normal capacity.

1. **All holy water fonts (and baptismal fonts)** are to be emptied. Should the faithful wish to have personal holy water, they may bring a bottle of water and the priest can bless it for them.
   a. Pastors should be aware that people often instinctively touch the water fonts, even if empty. These should be sanitized frequently as a precaution, removed entirely, or a sign placed over the opening.

2. **Processions**:
   a. Entrance & Exit: should not take place down the aisle, but via the sacristy. In the few cases where the sacristy is located at the entrance of the church, the priest celebrant (and deacon/servers) should ensure all precautions are taken to limit exposure when entering and exiting. In all cases pastors are asked not to greet the faithful before or after each Mass.
   b. Offertory: omitted
   c. With a relic or the image of the patron/patroness of the parish: omitted

3. **Hymns at Mass** – Recommendation: it be limited to the time it takes to complete the action being made.

4. **Lector**: one per Mass (recommended). Mask are required at all times.

5. **Altar servers & choir**: kept to a minimum functional number.

6. **Microphones**: disinfected after each use by each individual.

7. **Announcements/Universal prayer**: Disposable sheet or kept in a plastic covering (sheet protector) that can be disinfected after each use.

8. Since the holding of hands during the Lord’s Prayer is not a liturgical practice, it is to be omitted.

9. **The exchange of the sign of peace** at Mass has always been optional. During this time, it will be omitted.

10. **The Reception of the Precious Blood** will be suspended for the faithful.

11. **(for Clergy/EMHC) Distribution of Holy Communion**:
    a. After receiving Holy Communion - (1) Put on mask. (2) Sanitize hands. (3) Receive the ciborium and proceed to distribute. (4) Purify hands and sanitize after distribution.
    b. In case of physical contact with a communicant during distribution – (1) Purify your fingers in an ablation cup (or on a dampened purificator). (2) Sanitize your fingers before resuming distribution.
    c. At the conclusion of the distribution of Holy Communion, both clergy and EMHC are to sanitize their hands after returning the ciborium.
12. The faithful receiving Holy Communion must remove their mask (and gloves) just before receiving.
   a. For those who choose to attend Mass in their VEHICLES/under a CANOPY, a minister may go
      outside and distribute Holy Communion at the regular time, following the same prudence,
      hygiene rules, and social distance guidelines as indicated above.

13. Veneration (by physical touch) of images or relics are omitted.
   a. The Relic, image/statue of the Marian Title or Saint of whom the novena commemorates,
      karosa/ándas, MAY be placed in a prominently visible area, but distanced and not easily physically
      accessible. (ex: enshrined in an area of the Sanctuary, side altar, or other suitable place). The use
      of stanchions or other barrier devices around the shrine is encouraged.
   b. The appointment of an usher should be made whose responsibility it will be to safeguard the
      image/statue/relic and to maintain proper social distancing around the shrine.

14. The application (by physical touch) of blessed oil (sacramentals) is omitted. Should the faithful wish to
    have personal blessed oil (not the same as Holy Oil blessed by the Bishop at the Chrism Mass), they may
    bring a bottle of oil and the priest can bless it for them (the faithful may wish to indicate if the oil is to be
    blessed invoking the intercession of a particular saint, such as, St. Jude or San Roke).

15. Certain special customary practices will be omitted: children dressed as angels and archangels, crowning
    of images, offering of flower petals (particularly during Marian novenas), and the like.

16. (Fiestas and similar occasions) After the Final Blessing, the celebrant may give the accolade (the Bibal)
    in honor of the saint followed by a General Blessing with the relic (if applicable) prior to the Dismissal.

17. Devotional items, commemorative gifts or worship aides (Pew Missals, hymnals, music/prayer sheets,
    etc.).
   a. Parishes who wish to distribute these items, are discouraged from doing so at this time.
   b. If these items are distributed, they must be for personal use (not to be reused by another person).

18. Stations of the Cross or similar - Techá (Prayer leader) along with the congregation should remain in the
    pew to lead the Stations of the Cross. Only the Cross Bearer may process from station to station. No
    additional attendants (candle bearers, etc.) are permitted at this time.

Concelebrants, deacon assistants

1. Concelebrants and multiple assisting deacons are permitted but highly discouraged. This will be left to
   the discretion of the main celebrant. As a courtesy, all priests who wish to concelebrate/all deacons
   who wish to assist are to contact the main celebrant for notification.

2. Protocols for Concelebrants:
   a. Concelebrants should bring their own albs and stoles.
   b. Prior to the start of the Mass, concelebrants are to be seated at their designated places and not
      process in with the main celebrant.
   c. If a concelebrant/deacon is to take an active role in the Mass, he must keep his mask on.
   d. Concelebrants are not to take part in the portions of the Eucharistic Prayer.
   e. Reception of the Precious Blood for Concelebrants:
i. A separate chalice must be used for each concelebrant (OR: intinction may be done at a chalice(s) separate from the main celebrant.)

ii. (If applicable) Each concelebrant must purify the chalice he used. In the case of intinction: the last concelebrant in line is to consume and purify; OR the presider may consume and purify after the last concelebrant intincts.

3. **Reception of Holy Communion for Deacons (GIRM 182):**
   
   a. The Deacon is to receive Holy Communion from the presider. The deacon is not to self-communicate. He may receive from a separate chalice, or if by intinction, via the tongue.

---

**BAPTISM**

In addition to the COMMON PROTECTIVE MEASURES indicated above:

1. Priest or deacon must use double gloves.

2. The priest or deacon is to bless an unopened bottle of water for the rite, opening it only at the point it will be used in the rite.

3. For the anointing, add a small amount of each oil required onto a separate sterile cotton pad before the start of the ritual. Use these for the anointing. Used cotton pads must be disposed of via incineration or burial.
   
   a. If no sterile cotton pad is available, the outer glove may be used, but must be incinerated after the rite. (Avoid contamination: Do not dip your glove into the oil container; pour a small amount onto your glove.)
   
   b. 6-foot social distance is to be maintained, except for the specific moments in the rite that call for close contact such as the anointings and pouring of water.

---

**CONFIRMATION**

Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments (Prot. N. 470/20)

“For the validity of the sacrament of confirmation the law establishes that it is conferred by the ordinary minister, and by a priest with the faculty to do so, though the anointing with chrism on the forehead while the words prescribed in the liturgical books are pronounced (cf. cann. 880 §1 and 882). The use by the minister of an instrument (gloves, cotton swab), does not affect the validity of the Sacrament.” This adaptation is only to last until the end of the current health emergency.

In the Archdiocese of Agana, the minister is to use cotton swabs/cotton pads. Cotton swab/pad should not be reused and must be disposed of via incineration or burial.

---

**WEDDING**

In addition to the COMMON PROTECTIVE MEASURES indicated above:

1. **For the exchange of rings and coins** - place these items on a small table near the couple so that they handle these items themselves.

2. **Bello/Chord are permissible.**
FUNERALS

In addition to the COMMON PROTECTIVE MEASURES indicated above:

(OPTION 1) Traditional Form

1. Wake Service (Bela or Visitation/Viewing) at the Home of the deceased or the Funeral Home.
   a. This service is typically held several days before the funeral and it traditionally takes place at night. Some last for days while others last for just a few hours.
   b. The family traditionally would pray the Rosary at some point during the Wake Service.
   c. The family may also request for a priest or deacon to lead the ritual prayers known as the Vigil for the Deceased (This ritual prayer is often referred to as a “responso”). This “Vigil for the Deceased” can be done at any point during the Wake. However, it is most fittingly done at the beginning or end the Wake so as to not disrupt the flow of visitors.
   d. If the family choses to do a eulogy, it may done during the Wake Service.
   e. NOTE ON CREMATION: The Funeral Mass should be done before Cremation.

2. Funeral Mass
   a. After the viewing, the body is taken to the church for the Funeral Mass. (NOTE: The funeral Mass does not need to be the same day as the viewing.)
   b. A note on eulogies: The ritual indicates that the body is greeted at the entrance of the church and the Mass begins immediately. There is no pause for a eulogy, tributes, performances, chants, presentations of any kind or other announcements at that time. Friends and family who wish to say a few words about their loved one should plan to do so at the wake, after the Rite of Committal, or at a reception after the funeral, if there is one.
   c. Re: Greeting of the body ritual - As family and friends arrive, they must proceed directly to their pews before the greeting of the body ritual begins. Only the four (4) bearers designated to escort the casket into the church are to gather around the casket with the priest at the entrance of the church for this ritual.

3. Rite of Committal (interment or burial)
   a. Immediately after the Funeral Mass, the customary burial procession to the cemetery begins.
   b. When all have gathered at the cemetery, the priest or deacon begins the Rite of Committal.
   c. At the conclusion of the Rite of Committal, the body of the deceased (or cremated remains) is placed in the ground (tomb, niche, crypt). If the family choses to do a eulogy or other presentations, it is done at this time.

(OPTION 2) Simple Form

1. Wake Service w/ Funeral Liturgy (no Mass)
   a. If the family chooses a simple Funeral liturgy at a funeral home, the priest or deacon performs what is called the funeral liturgy outside of the context of the Mass. This may be done before the opening of the casket for the viewing or when the casket is closed at the end of the viewing time.
   b. The family may also wish to say a few words about their loved one (eulogy) and pray the Rosary at
some point during the Wake Service w/ Funeral Liturgy.

c. NOTE ON CREMATION: If the family chooses not to have a public viewing, the priest (or deacon) will simply perform the funeral liturgy outside of the context of the Mass right before the cremation.

2. **Rite of Committal**: takes places as described in option 1

3. **Recommendation**: please see below, the section on Mass intention for the dead.

**(OPTION 3) Graveside Service only** - As the title suggests, this form is the simplest of the three (3) options.

Gathered at the gravesite, the priest (or deacon), surrounded by family and friends of the deceased, only performs the Rite of Committal as describe in option 1.

*Recommendation: please see below, the section on Mass intention for the dead.

**Mass Intention for the Dead (Misan Ánimas)**

1. At some point after the burial, we encourage family and friends to gather for a Mass and offer a Mass intention for their deceased loved one (also known as Misan Ánimas). This Mass can be on any day there is Mass scheduled at a parish. Or, if the family wishes to schedule a Memorial Mass for the dead, on a special date and time, please see the parish priest to make these special arrangements.

**Traditional Nightly (9-day) rosaries** may be held at the home of the deceased. (If available, it may also be held in the parish church. Please see the pastor for scheduling purposes if it is to be held at the church.)

**CONFESSION**

In addition to the COMMON PROTECTIVE MEASURES indicated above:

1. **Ensure that the setting will ensure the confidentiality of the sacrament.**

2. **FOR HOMEBOUND**
   
a. Option 1 (preferred) - Meet the person outside of the home (ex: porch or lawn) provided that there is sufficient space for a private conversation.

b. Option 2 - Speak through an exterior window of the home.

c. Option 3 – Inside the home
   
i. Wear the confession stole, wear a mask, and sanitize hands before entering.

ii. Leave your phone in the vehicle.

iii. Avoid touching anything in the home.

iv. Sanitize hands before returning to the vehicle and before removing the stole.

3. **APOSTOLIC PARDON** - “A priest who administers the sacraments to someone in danger of death should not fail to impart the apostolic blessing to which a plenary indulgence is attached.
ANointing of the sick

In addition to the common protective measures indicated above:

If person is confirmed or suspected COVID+ and is self-isolating at home or hospitalized: Contact the Vicar for Clergy for instructions.

All other cases

1. Before entering any facility (hospital room or home)
   a. Personal protective equipment (PPE) must be worn – Mask and double gloves
   b. Wear stole
   c. (For homes) all air conditioning units and fans must be shut off and if available a window should be opened.
   d. (For homes) Door to patient’s room must remain open.
   e. Room must be cleared of individuals other than one other person (medical personnel, family/friend, caregiver, etc.).

2. Standing 6 feet from the patient
   a. Add a small amount of oil onto a sterile cotton pad (cf. can. 1000 §2).
   b. Close the holy oil bottle first, place in your pocket, then begin the Rite of Anointing.
      i. Consider using a small bottle with a small opening (ex. small holy water bottle)
   c. Omit the laying on of hands
   d. After anointing the individual with the oiled sterile cotton pad, return to 6ft distance.
      i. In the event a sterile cotton pad is not available, the outer glove may be used.
   e. Communion may be given as Viaticum
   f. After the anointing, remove the outer glove while holding the cotton pad used to anoint (and the disposal ritual), so that the glove is turned inside-out to become a “trash bag” for the cotton pad and ritual. Peel off the outer glove of the other hand so that it comes off inside out (with the other glove inside it).
   g. These used gloves must be placed in a sealed disposable bag along with the sterile cotton pad containing the sacred oil. This sealed disposable bag will be placed in a second sealed disposable bag for additional protection and precaution.

3. Before entering your vehicle
   a. (You may want to leave a small bottle of hand sanitizer/alcohol spray near your car before you visit the patient.)
   b. Remove your gloves, place in disposable bag, then sanitize your hands
   c. Remove your mask, place in disposable bag, then sanitize your hands
   d. Sanitize your holy oil stock and ritual book, then sanitize your hands.
   e. Do not touch your car keys, phone, car door or other items until after you sanitize your hands.
f. Gloves, mask, sterile cotton pad and the bags that hold them are to be disposed of via incineration immediately when you return to the rectory. Be sure to wash your hands with soap and water to remove the alcohol-based gels to prevent accidental burns.

4. DECONTAMINATE WHEN YOU RETURN TO YOUR RECTORY – change clothes, shower.

HOSPITAL – Protocols specific to each institution

1. GUAM MEMORIAL HOSPITAL (GMH) will not permit a priest to enter without an invitation.
   a. The patient (or the next of kin) must request for a priest from the nursing supervisor.
      i. The request should indicate: Confession, Holy Communion, Anointing of the Sick, and or Last Rites.
   b. If approved, the nurse will contact the Archdiocese Point of Contact (POC) requesting for a priest.
      i. GMH officials will notify their hospital Security guard of the name of the priest who will be responding to the request.
   c. NOTE: If the patient (or family/friends of the patient) call the priest personally, the priest is required to explain to the patient/family/friend that they must call GMH first and speak to the nursing supervisor to make the request.
   d. St. Anthony parish priests are the first responders to GMH.

2. GUAM REGIONAL MEDICAL CITY (GRMC) – Santa Barbara Parish priests are the first responders to GRMC.
   a. Other priests are permitted to visit patients in this hospital. Please call the hospital for visitation rules.

U.S. Naval Hospital Guam (Naval) - * Please call the hospital for more information.

ST. BLAISE (Blessing of Throats)

On the memorial of St. Blaise, the Book of Blessing #1627 indicates “The blessing may be given by touching the throat of each person with two candles...”. As indicated above, the physical touching of objects or common surfaces cannot be done without sanitization after each use. Therefore, the option indicated in # 1628 may be used. “1628...a priest or deacon may give the blessing to all assembled by extending hands, without the crossed candles, over the people while saying the prayer of blessing. A lay minister says the prayer proper to lay ministers without making the sign of the cross.”

LENT & ASH WEDNESDAY (including the guideline above)

1. BLESSING AND DISTRIBUTION OF ASHES – From the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, 12 January 2021
   a. “The Priest says the prayer for blessing the ashes. He sprinkles the ashes with holy water, without saying anything. Then he addresses all those present and only once says the formula as it appears in the Roman Missal, applying it to all in general: “Repent, and believe in the Gospel”, or “Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return”. The Priest then cleanses his hands, puts on a face mask and distributes the ashes to those who come to him or, if appropriate, he goes to those who are standing in their places. The Priest takes the ashes and sprinkles them on the head of each one without saying anything.

Acknowledging the fluidity of the current public health emergency, these sacramental protocols supersede all previous protocols, unless otherwise indicated, and will be effective immediately and continue until further notice.

+Michael J. Byrnes, Metropolitan Archbishop of Agaña

Feb 10, 2021  Date