

## SAFETY PROTOCOLS FOR REOPENING FOR PUBLIC MASSES

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As people of faith, we must always keep aware of the importance of acting in a socially responsible way, in order to give good example to others and to witness the special concern we are called to have to act with charity toward all. As we start to open up for public Masses here in the Archdiocese of San Francisco, then, we must necessarily begin by allowing only a limited number of attendants at each Mass in order to ensure compliance with social distancing guidelines and other safety protocols, and so continue cooperating with the efforts of our public officials to stem the spread of the coronavirus. The following directives will help to ensure that we are acting in a socially responsible way, while enabling us to carry out our supreme call and duty to worship God in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. If we all continue to do our part in this effort, we will be able to take further steps, gradually, toward returning to ordinary parish life. The Archdiocese will continue to issue directives to guide parish events, group meetings and other such activities as we progress, step by step, toward this goal.

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### GENERAL PRINCIPLES

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1. All the faithful in the Archdiocese of San Francisco are dispensed from the obligation of attending Sunday Mass. Although the faithful are dispensed from their obligation to attend Mass, they must observe the Lord's Day and are encouraged to spend time in prayer on Sunday (such as following a livestream Mass or participating in a spiritual or corporal act of mercy). This also applies to Holy Days of Obligation.
2. Those who are at higher risk of COVID-19 (e.g., those who are older or who have underlying health conditions) are to continue staying at home. Likewise, anyone with a cough of any sort, and anyone feeling ill, should not come to the church for a visit or for any ceremonies. As circumstances allow, a visit from a priest, deacon, or extraordinary minister of Holy Communion to bring them the Eucharist may be possible.
3. A priest with a respiratory infection of any kind should avoid celebrating public Masses or administering sacraments. The same holds for other ministers who might serve at a Mass (deacon, servers, lectors) as well as for sacristans, ushers, etc.
4. Parishes should continue to livestream Masses if feasible or direct parishioners to the Archdiocesan website for a listing of livestream links.
5. Parishes are not to hold events before or after Masses until directed by the Archdiocese.
6. Each parish is to provide clear means of communication to its parishioners (e.g., bulletin, website, social media, Flocknote and general announcements).
7. Ushers are critical for the social distancing to work. Parishioners are to follow all directions of ushers before and during Mass. Ushers should show parishioners to their pew.

## ARRANGEMENT AND PROCEDURES FOR THE WORSHIP SPACE

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1. In charity to all and in consideration of public health and safety, those attending Mass must wear a mask. All faithful able to do so are asked to bring their own hand sanitizer and mask. Churches will provide a limited supply of masks and hand sanitizer as that is possible for them.
2. Pews and other high-touch areas such as doorknobs are to be sanitized after every Mass. See the link for CDC cleaning guidelines. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/reopen-guidance.html>
3. Signage: at entrances to the church, post signs alerting people to the safety protocols to be observed.
4. Liturgical ministers do not wear masks.
5. The six-foot distance rule must be strictly enforced. Each church should pre-stage distanced pews in accordance with the social distancing guidelines.
  - Cordon off pews to insure a minimum of six feet between pews in which people will be sitting. Brightly colored and discernable tape or rope should be used.
  - Ushers should serve as monitors.
  - Place tape on the floor to ensure distance in the Communion line.
  - Members of a single household do not need to practice physical distancing with each other and so may sit together in the same row.
6. Each parish is to identify an established volunteer core to assist in the sanitizing of the church after each Mass.
7. Scheduling of Mass – all Masses held inside of church should be kept short, not to exceed 30-40 minutes in duration. Masses can also be held in an alternative site such as a parish hall, in which case the Mass times should be staggered in order to avoid outdoor crowding when people arrive and leave (e.g., in the church, Masses are every hour on the hour, and in the hall, every hour on the first quarter hour). Alternative sites must comply with the same guidelines. The scheduling of Masses will be left to the discretion of the Pastor. In anticipation of people arriving for one Mass while those at the previous Mass are still leaving the church, separate designated ports of ingress and egress should be used in order to avoid crowding.
8. Music should be provided only when a liturgical action is taking place, and limited to the time necessary to cover the action (e.g., entrance chant up to moment ministers arrive at their places in the sanctuary, during the preparation of the altar only for the time the altar is being prepared and not beyond, etc.). The parts of the Mass (Kyrie, Gloria, etc.) can only be sung if they can be kept to a minimum time such that the total length of the Mass does not exceed 40 minutes; otherwise, they are to be recited. Music can be provided by one musician and one cantor but no choir and without congregational singing.
9. Given the reduced number of people at Mass due to the social distancing guidelines, a system will have to be implemented to limit the number of persons attending any given Mass. Methods such as Eventbrite or reservations can be helpful in this regard. Ushers and other volunteers will assist in ensuring that no more than the number permissible will attend each Mass. Provisions should be made to accommodate overflow in other buildings.
10. For some parishes, it is also possible to have Mass outdoors. This is to be preferred if it can be arranged in a dignified way while maintaining the required social distancing, as outdoor space minimizes sustained exposure to the virus.
11. Parishes will have to develop a plan for restroom use: limit the number of people who enter a restroom at the same time, and place tape on the floor outside of the restroom to indicate where

- people should stand in line to wait for the restroom, while maintaining a 6-foot distance from each other. It is advisable to have ushers placed at the restrooms to monitor compliance with these regulations. Restrooms will need to be regularly sanitized by properly-trained parish staff.
12. Consider keeping the church or building doors open to prevent the touching of common surfaces and to maximize the circulation of fresh air.
  13. An initial announcement should be made communicating the temporary liturgical alterations (e.g., no handshake at the Sign of Peace and the changes in the distribution of Holy Communion).

### CONSIDERATIONS FOR CONDUCTING MASS

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1. All liturgical aids (e.g., song books, missalettes, worship aids, etc.) are to be removed from the church and kept in storage prior to the commencement of public Masses.
2. To the extent possible, the liturgical ministers (deacon, servers, lectors) should maintain a 6-foot distance from the priest and from each other. This includes any time they may be together in the sacristy before or after Mass.
3. All ministers must sanitize their hands before processing out to begin the Mass.
4. The priest and other ministers should enter the sanctuary from the sacristy.
5. The priest will place the Missal on a stand at the chair or on the altar when he recites the presidential prayers, rather than having a server hold the Roman Missal.
6. The offertory procession (bringing up the offerings) should be omitted.
7. The collection or offering baskets should be placed in strategic locations before Mass begins. This mitigates the congregation leaving the pews during Mass and minimizes exposure. Those handling money, checks and envelopes must wear protective sanitation gloves and wash their hands after touching these items.
8. A deacon (if present) or a server brings the Missal, chalice, paten/ciborium, and cruets of wine and water to the altar, while the priest remains at the chair. Alternatively, the vessels may be kept on the right side of the altar or on a credence table next to it before Mass begins (GIRM, n. 255 – which would be particularly indicated if there is no deacon or if the priest carries out the introductory and concluding rites from the altar instead of the chair). The deacon then, if present, arranges the items on the altar and prepares the chalice in the usual way; otherwise, this is done by the priest.
9. The lavabo should be done by the priest alone, without assistance, either at a credence table near the altar or at the side of the altar itself. The lavabo bowl should have water in it already, with the towel next to it. After he performs the lavabo, the priest should then sanitize his hands. The lavabo items should remain on the credence table and be removed by the priest after the Mass.
10. The hosts to be consecrated for the Communion of the faithful are to be placed on a second corporal towards the side of the altar. This allows the priest to proffer the words of consecration directly over the host he will consume, with the other hosts on the altar but not directly in front of the priest as he speaks the Eucharistic Prayer.
11. For the elevation of the sacred species at *“Through him, and with him, and in him,”* if a deacon is present, he may stand alongside the priest and elevate the chalice. Since this action is brief, he need not remain 6 feet from the priest while doing so.
12. The faithful exchange the sign of peace by remaining in their places and reverently bowing to each other.

13. Communion is distributed only to the liturgical ministers at the usual time during the Mass. Communion for the faithful in the pews is distributed immediately after the conclusion of the Mass, as described below. Only the priest receives from the chalice, which he himself then purifies after distributing Communion to the liturgical ministers.

### THE DISTRIBUTION OF COMMUNION

The distribution will take place immediately after the conclusion of Mass, i.e., immediately after the dismissal, with no recessional song being sung. This will allow for the Communion minister to wear a mask while distributing, which would not be appropriate within the context of the Mass. It will also allow for further safety precautions which could not be observed within the context of Mass, at least, not without inconvenience and without violating the symbolic and liturgical integrity of the Mass (which is to be celebrated without mask or gloves).

1. At the start of Mass, or at a suitable point during Mass (e.g., before Communion or after the *Lamb of God*) the priest should explain that those who desire to receive Holy Communion may do so at the conclusion of the Mass. He may add that the faithful should maintain a 6-foot distance from each other as they come forward for Holy Communion.
2. The Precious Blood is not to be distributed to the faithful. A concelebrating priest should either have his own chalice and purificator (which he himself purifies) or may self-communicate by intinction.
3. After giving Communion to the liturgical ministers, the priest leaves the ciborium/ciboria on the altar, covered, on top of a corporal.
4. After the concluding blessing and the dismissal, the priest (and deacon, if present) remain in the sanctuary, while the other liturgical ministers return to the sacristy. At the chair, the priest removes his chasuble and the deacon his dalmatic. The purpose of removing the chasuble or dalmatic is to mitigate exposure to the vestments and minimize laundering.
5. A small table should be placed at each Communion station, with an unfolded corporal, a bottle of hand sanitizer that is unscented, and an ablution bowl and purificator.
6. The priest (and any other ministers distributing Holy Communion) sanitizes their hands (Holy Communion may not be given with gloves on). The priest approaches the altar, holds up a single host and says, "*Behold the Lamb of God. Behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.*" He then leads the people in saying: "*Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word, and my soul shall be healed.*" The priest (and any other ministers distributing Holy Communion) dons a surgical mask or cloth face covering, takes the ciborium, and goes to the Communion station.
7. The faithful should also remove any face coverings before coming forward for Holy Communion, as well as gloves if they are wearing them and wish to receive Communion in the hand. Consider the help of an usher (wearing a mask) to assist the faithful to come forward pew by pew, to remind the faithful to maintain 6 feet distance and that they are to remove gloves and mask before coming forward for Holy Communion. Immediately upon receiving Holy Communion, the faithful should resume the proper use of their face coverings.
8. The faithful receive Holy Communion in the normal way. If the priest senses that his fingers have made contact with a person's hands or mouth, he should pause, place the ciborium on the corporal, cleanse his fingers in the ablution bowl and dry them on the purificator, and then use hand sanitizer (non-scented). The same holds true for extraordinary ministers of Holy

Communion as well as deacons who are distributing Communion. The water in the ablution bowl should then be poured down the sacrarium (or, lacking one, poured into the ground in a place away from where people are likely to walk). He may repeat this process as often as he judges necessary during the distribution of Holy Communion. It is not necessary, however, for him to use hand sanitizer between each communicant, unless he makes actual contact.

9. At the conclusion of the distribution of Holy Communion, the priest (and any other ministers) return the remaining hosts to the tabernacle. The faithful may depart after making a brief prayer of thanksgiving. Alternatively, the priest may say the concluding prayer, blessing, and dismissal from the *Rite for Holy Communion Outside of Mass*, as follows:

*“Let us pray. O God, who in this wonderful Sacrament have left us a memorial of your Passion, grant us, we pray, so to revere the sacred mysteries of your Body and Blood that we may always experience in ourselves the fruits of your redemption. Who live and reign with God the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.”*

He then gives a blessing in the normal way and dismisses the people with: *“Go in the peace of Christ.”*

10. After the sacred vessels are purified, they should be washed after each Mass with hot water and soap.
11. All sacred linens that are to be cleaned must be placed in a plastic bag.

### CONSIDERATIONS FOR OUTDOOR MASSES

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As we approach pleasant weather, outdoor Masses are a good option. This will alleviate the necessity to sanitize a larger church space and serve as a viable alternative to smaller space.

1. Care needs to be taken so that the sacred elements are protected from the weather.
2. The same precautions and guidelines for indoor Masses should be followed.
3. Cars should be parked in one area and the Mass should be celebrated in a different area.
4. The faithful are encouraged to bring their own seating to relieve the parish from the burden of sanitizing seating. The seating arrangement is to be clearly marked and allow for proper distancing.
5. The same guidelines for restroom access and sanitization as indoor Masses apply.
6. Distribution of Holy Communion would follow the guidelines for indoor Mass. There is to be no distribution of Holy Communion to congregants in their vehicle.