



CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF KALAMAZOO

GUIDELINES FOR THE FAITHFUL

FOR PUBLIC CELEBRATIONS OF THE HOLY MASS*

*These Guidelines are in effect beginning May 27, 2020 and throughout the duration of Parish Community Level 1 of our return to the public celebration of Holy Mass. The guidelines may be amended if/when the circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic change.

Dispensation from the Obligation of Sunday and Holy Day Masses

The dispensation from the Sunday obligation to attend Mass is granted to all the faithful through September 6, 2020. All the faithful however have the obligation to “keep holy the Lord’s Day” and on Sundays are encouraged to spend time in prayer, participate in a live stream of the Mass, meditate on the Lord’s Passion, Death and Resurrection, and participate in Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy.

***Please note the date of the General Dispensation is at the discretion of the Bishop and is subject to change based on current conditions related to the managing the spread of the pandemic and in consultation with federal, state and local healthcare recommendations.*

Timelines

Preparatory Stage: Beginning May 13, 2020 through the time leading up to the first public celebration of Mass, anticipated for May 27, 2020. The General Dispensation remains in effect.

Parish Community Level One: Welcome Back! Return to Public Mass, May 27, 2020; The General Dispensation continues through September 6, 2020.

Parish Community Level Two: To be implemented with lifting of restrictions and allowance of more capacity at Parishes.

Parish Community Level Three: Full Capacity allowed at Parishes; Dispensation no longer in effect

General Guiding Principles

The Common Good: We must consider the common good as we determine all that we do. The common good considers the spiritual, financial, mental, and physical health of the entire society. During this time we must balance the spiritual health and the physical health of the faithful. This is especially true for the most vulnerable members of our populations, including the elderly and those with chronic illnesses. We also must rely on medical personnel and scientists to give the best advice in these matters.

Keep the Liturgical Year: Even in the darkest days of the pandemic, the Holy Father and his Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments made clear that Easter would not be “postponed.” Liturgical seasons preceded it and followed it. Similarly, the entire course of the liturgical year is to be maintained and the primacy of Sunday is to be respected (General Norms for the Liturgical Year and the Calendar, 4; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2177).

Limited Attendance: The dispensation for the requirement to attend Sunday Mass will be extended. Those at higher risk; namely, the elderly, the immune-compromised and hospital workers, may likely need to wait until Level 3 before returning to the public celebration of the Mass. There might be creative solutions to allow people in these categories to attend Mass with a decreased risk of contamination (e.g. grocery stores with hours specific to these populations) but it will be some time before we can resume full capacity at our churches.

Continuance of Live-streamed/Televised Masses and Communication: The continuation of live-streamed liturgies is highly encouraged. All parishes that are currently live-streaming Mass have been encouraged to continue the practice at least one Mass each weekend, for those who are homebound, sick, or otherwise vulnerable. Clergy and Parish staffs are encouraged to continue to increase the communication to parishioners by using all means possible providing opportunities for catechesis and engagement in digital formats and video conferencing technology.

Prudence and Common Sense: Every reasonable means will be employed to keep the spread of COVID-19 under control, realizing, of course, the impossibility of creating a totally risk-free environment.

Be informed: There will be a number of changes determined by your Pastor and Parish Preparation Team. Please visit your Parish website and review all Parish communication so you are informed as to the specifics regarding your Parish Community (e.g. Mass time changes, attendance procedures, etc.).

Grace and Understanding: None of us have lived through a pandemic before, and so there are likely to be mistakes and imperfections as we attempt to do so. Priests, leaders, parishioners, and all who assist, as well as the Diocese, are likely to make some incorrect assessments and decisions. We all will need the grace of humility and “a spirit of cooperation” to get through this together.

Safety and Hygiene Protocols

Our parish communities are a great good that we want to preserve. All those attending Mass are strongly encouraged to adhere to the following:

Masks (cloth face coverings) are to be worn by everyone approaching the church and inside the church (except for those under 2 years old and those who have a medical condition that impedes them from wearing a mask), as well as all church buildings.

Social distancing is necessary. There will be clear protocols that will change where you can sit, how you can greet people, and how to receive Holy Communion. You will need to keep six feet of distance between anyone not in your household for the foreseeable future at church.

Those who are sick or symptomatic should stay home.

Please wash your hands at home, and use hand sanitizer upon entering the church. You may also bring your own supply of hand sanitizer to use before Holy Communion.

Physical Distancing

The capacity of the church is limited to no more than 25% (one-fourth) of its total capacity to ensure proper social distancing is achievable.

A distance of six feet (6') is to be maintained between persons in general, as much as possible (unless you reside in the same household).

Seating availability will be clearly marked (such as designated seats in alternating pews with a 1 or 2-pew separation or seating in different sections for different Masses). Those living in the same household may sit together without social distancing.

Cry Rooms are closed until further notice due to the limited space constrictions and inability to ensure social distancing is possible.

Rest Rooms: No more than 1 person (or 1 parent + children from same household) allowed at a time.

Bulletins and Parish printed materials: Parish bulletins may be made available to parishioners in the narthex/vestibule, along with other printed materials, but will not be distributed by ushers or others. The Parish Bulletin should also be made available online.

Notes for Mass

Offertory Collection: Secure receptacles or supervised baskets will be available at the entrances to the church or other designated places. An offertory collection will not be taken up during the celebration of the Mass.

The Sign of Peace: This liturgical action, shared among the faithful, will continue to be a "contact-free" gesture.

Reception of Holy Communion

Holy Communion is to be distributed only under the Species of the Sacred Host. The Precious Blood is not to be distributed at this time.

The faithful have the right to receive either on the tongue or in the hand, according to the discipline of the Church

Holy Communion may not be received in the hand if someone is wearing a glove. Instead, proper and diligent hand hygiene should be observed before and after distributing and/or receiving Holy Communion.

The faithful should remove any masks and gloves as they approach the minister.

If possible, the reverence and the verbal exchange should take place 6 feet away: Bow – “The Body of Christ” – “Amen” – then step forward to receive.

Reception in the Hand: For those receiving in the hand, please approach the priest (or deacon or EMHC), placing your dominant hand under your less dominant hand creating a sort of throne upon which to receive the Lord. After receiving Jesus in your hand, step to the side, and place the Host gently in your mouth, making sure to consume any particles of the Eucharist that remain in your less dominant hand, as even the smallest particle is still Jesus. Then, simply replace your mask and return prayerfully to your seat.

Reception on the Tongue: During this time, it might be better to consider receiving in the hand; however, if you choose to receive on the tongue please adhere to the following: approach the priest (or deacon or Eucharistic Minister). Please allow time for the Host to be placed safely on your tongue, and for the one distributing to remove his hand, so as to avoid contact. After receiving, replace your mask and return prayerfully to your pew.

Dismissal:

The Presider will announce dismissal procedure at the conclusion of Mass. Please prepare to return to your vehicles promptly. It is not recommended that you congregate with other Parishioners.

Thank you for your prayer, patience and understanding during this time. Please visit www.diokzoo.org for updates.

Please send questions to: officeofcommunications@diokzoo.org

We ask that you please be courteous and charitable in your communication.