

Archdiocese of Kansas City in Kansas
Safety Protocols for Public Worship in Midst of Ongoing Pandemic
July 3, 2020

Introduction:

After an encouraging downward trend in COVID-19 numbers for infections, hospitalizations and deaths that allowed for gradual reopening of businesses, social venues and most importantly our churches, those same trends across Kansas and the greater KC metro area unfortunately appear to be getting worse in some areas. We are blessed that in general the counties that make up the Archdiocese are not nearly as bad as some of the “hot spots” around the country. However, we know the risks associated with COVID-19 will persist for some time and there are concerns that there may be an even worse upsurge in cases if continued vigilance and additional steps as seen in the recent Kansas mask order are not taken.

AS SUCH, HEALTH OFFICIALS AND MEDICAL ADVISORS CONTINUE TO STRESS THE IMPORTANCE OF EXERCISING ONGOING DISCRETION IN ACTIVITIES AND ASK THAT WE ALL FOLLOW, WHEREVER POSSIBLE, THE HEALTH GUIDELINES REGARDING SOCIAL DISTANCING, WEARING MASKS, HAND WASHING, SANITIZING OF SURFACES AND OTHER REASONABLE AND PRUDENT MEASURES.

Local Control: On May 26, 2020, Governor Kelly announced that the “Ad Astra” plan for reopening Kansas would no longer be a controlling order, but rather “guidance” on best practices for how to reopen activities within Kansas, and ceded official control and enforcement of reopening plans to the counties. On June 22, the Governor recommended that Kansas remain in Phase 3, then on June 29 ANNOUNCED THAT MASKS MUST BE WORN STATEWIDE BEGINNING ON JULY 3. Authorities from the various counties of the Archdiocese are in the process of making announcements as to whether they will follow this most recent mask order (SEE BELOW FOR MORE INFORMATION REGARDING MASKS). The Archdiocese encourages in counties and municipalities that have not rejected the governor’s mask order that Catholics respect the governor’s request. Though individuals may not think this step necessary, for concern for the health of our fellow Kansans, we will work together to minimize the ongoing spread of the virus. If someone in our congregation is not wearing a mask, we should assume that they have a health condition that prevents them from wearing one. THEREFORE, IT IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT THAT ALL PRIESTS AND PARISH STAFFS REVIEW AND REMAIN UP TO DATE ON THE PLANS OF THE COUNTY IN WHICH THEY ARE LOCATED. Every reasonable effort should be made to observe state and local guidance. If you have questions about a particular local requirement that appears to be too restrictive, please contact Fr. John Riley or our General Counsel Chris Arth for further discussion.

Safety Guidelines:

The original guidelines issued on May 5 and June 9, 2020 have been modified as follows. All parishes are encouraged to follow these recommendations for conducting Masses, funerals, weddings, baptisms and devotions, in line with local county directives. When the county in which a parish is located is less restrictive than this document, the pastor may at his discretion follow the county’s directives, what is given in this document, or a combination of both depending on the particular needs and demographics of his parish.

Continue to dispense from the Sunday obligation: The dispensation given for all Catholics in the Archdiocese by Archbishop Naumann from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass will

remain in effect until it is safe to lift it. It is likely this dispensation will stay in place into Fall 2020. **The dispensation from Sunday Mass continues because the Church does not want to place a moral burden on those who should not attend Sunday Mass because of age or health conditions. However, Catholics are still obliged to keep the Commandments, including the Commandment to keep holy the Lord's Day. Families who choose not to attend Mass should conduct a Liturgy of the Word in the home. Individuals and families should spend additional time in prayer, pious devotions and spiritual reading on Sunday. Younger adults who are least at risk from the virus should take advantage of the opportunity to participate at Mass and to receive Holy Communion if they are properly disposed. If those in good health are attending other large social gatherings, they should also be participating at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass on Sundays.**

- Persons with higher vulnerability to the virus, for personal safety reasons, are strongly encouraged to take advantage of the dispensation and refrain from attending public Mass on Sunday.
- If possible, parishes should continue to offer live streaming of daily and weekend masses.
- Pastors and priests should make provisions, to the extent possible and in accord with all the prescribed safety guidelines, to make occasional pastoral visits to those who cannot or elect not to attend Mass. Visits should, if prudence requires, be limited to greeting at the door and offering Confession and Holy Communion at the door of the residence, observing all the safety recommendations stated below. Residents or family members should be consulted prior to making a home visit to determine the appropriate level of contact.
- **Those who have symptoms:** out of charity and concern for the welfare of others, anyone with any kind of acute symptoms, a fever, cough or recent exposure to an infected person should not attend any religious services.
- **Limit density at gatherings:** as of June 22, 2020, the State of Kansas continues to recommend the guidelines provided in Phase 3 of the "Ad Astra" plan. **AGAIN, REMEMBER THAT LOCAL GOVERNMENTS MAY IMPOSE LESS, EQUAL OR MORE STRINGENT RESTRICTIONS TO MASK REQUIREMENTS AND PUBLIC GATHERINGS.**
 - To clarify the issue of the allowable size of gatherings, it is important to understand the term "mass gathering" as it is used in the Ad Astra Plan and other guidance. "Mass gatherings" are "instances in which individuals are in one location and are unable to maintain 6 feet of distance between individuals (not including individuals who reside together) with only infrequent or incidental moments of closer proximity."
 - If social distancing guidelines ARE followed, the Ad Astra Plan does not place a numerical limit on the number of people that may gather in one location. Rather, the total allowable gathering number is the maximum number of people that can fit in the space and still comply with social distancing.
 - If social distancing guidelines are NOT followed, the gathering would be considered a "mass gathering" and the Phase 3 Guidelines recommend that gatherings of these types be limited to no more than 45 individuals.
 - For the health and safety of all parishioners of the Archdiocese, parishes should follow these Phase 3 guidelines by which social distancing is maintained until further direction is received as to when the next phase of the Ad Astra plan is scheduled to go into effect. However, if a county allows greater flexibility, a

pastor may choose to follow county directives, based on the needs or demographics of the parish.

- To achieve the recommended social distancing, pastors should consider leaving every other pew vacant.
 - Lines for Holy Communion should observe six-foot distances as the line progresses; this may require only one line for Holy Communion with no side by side standing.
 - Entry and departure from the worship space should use as many doors as possible to avoid congestion at doors.
 - Entry and exit doors may be propped open, as much as possible, to avoid the need for attendees to touch the door.
 - Each pastor should determine how best to moderate the number of parishioners who participate at each Mass. Local experience to date should guide whether online signup or other means are necessary.
- **Video tutorial:**
 - A video tutorial is provided on the Archdiocesan website which discusses how to properly arrive at church, sanitize hands, observe the prescribed social distancing, use face masks, approach for Holy Communion, etc.
 - Pastors should link to this video from their parish websites and encourage parishioners to study the videos in preparation for returning to church.
- **Best practices for sanitation, hygiene, and social distancing should still be followed by all of those attending:** those who attend Masses and other religious services in churches should observe the following:
 - Observe crowd size restrictions as described above.
 - Parishes should make available supplies so that parishioners can purify hands with sanitizer upon entering and exiting the church.
 - **MASKS: Per the governor's recent order, beginning on July 3, "any person in Kansas shall cover their mouth and nose with a mask or other face covering when they are ... inside or in line to enter any indoor public space." As such, all participants at Mass must be reminded to wear a mask at all times other than when receiving Holy Communion.**
 - Please note that there are exceptions to the requirement for wearing masks, including children under age 5, persons with medical or mental health conditions, or disability that prevents wearing a mask including conditions where wearing a mask could obstruct breathing, etc.
 - It may be advisable to post signs, note on your websites and / or email parishioners information regarding this new requirement for wearing masks.
 - Masks should be worn by priests, deacons, or other ministers while processing in and out of Mass and while distributing Holy Communion, but not while proclaiming the word, preaching and leading the faithful in prayer
 - Those attending Mass should be asked to bring their own masks, but parishes should have an ample supply of masks available for those who do not bring one.
 - Avoid shaking hands, hugging or other close contact with individuals who are not members of one's household.

- For those opting to receive Holy Communion, always observe six-foot minimum distancing between individuals who are not members of the same household and observe the mask usage practices described in the tutorial video.
 - Congregational singing is not allowed until further notice, to limit droplet dispersion.
- **Liturgical practices to be observed by priests, deacons and extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion:**
 - Strive to limit the duration of Sunday Masses to 45 minutes if possible to limit exposure time between persons and allow for sanitizing between Masses
 - Ensure effective air circulation via HVAC system or by opening windows
 - Discontinue use of shared hymnals or prayer books in the church
 - Refrain from exchanging the sign of peace
 - Continue to refrain from placement of holy water in stoups or entry fonts
 - Continue to prohibit passing of the collection plate, providing instead a basket at entrances for attendees to drop offerings
 - Continue to suspend the offertory procession; the elements of bread and wine should be covered with a purificator or pall while on the altar.
 - Distribution of the Sacred Host should be carefully “released” into the cupped hand of the communicant, avoiding skin to skin contact between minister and communicant.
 - Given the varying opinions within the medical and scientific community regarding transmission of the virus, we do not encourage reception of Holy Communion on the tongue at this time. For those wishing to receive Holy Communion on the tongue, there should be a designated minister or extraordinary minister assigned exclusively for this option at a particular station. This minister or extraordinary minister should sanitize his or her hands between communicants. Priests might choose to distribute Holy Communion on the tongue after Mass.
 - Continue to prohibit the reception of Holy Communion from the chalice (except for the priest)
 - Pastors should keep the number of altar servers and other liturgical ministers to the minimum required to effectively celebrate the Liturgy.
 - Music ministry should be limited to a cantor and accompanist.
 - Pews and commonly touched surfaces must be sanitized at the beginning of each day and should be sanitized between Masses and other devotionals.
 - Ensure proper sanitizing of sacred vessels after each Mass
 - Provisions should be made to sanitize door handles and other commonly touched surfaces (bathroom fixtures, etc.), several times per day.
 - The above guidelines for Sunday Mass should be adapted for daily Masses.
 - **Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion:**
 - Ministers and extraordinary ministers should wear masks while distributing Holy Communion.
 - They should sanitize hands before and after distribution and avoid touching the hands of communicants.
 - If they do accidentally touch a communicant’s hand, the minister should stop and sanitize their own hands before moving on to the next communicant.

- Procedures should be in place to have hand sanitizer nearby and a method for safely setting down the ciborium or paten while the minister's hands are sanitized.
- Hands should always be re-sanitized after touching or removing the face mask.

- **Guidelines for Adoration:**
 - Perpetual adoration chapels may be reopened at the discretion of the pastor. Directions to comply with social distancing should be prominently displayed at the entrance to the chapel.
 - Provisions should be made to sanitize door handles and other commonly touched surfaces (bathroom fixtures, etc.), several times per day.
 - Anyone with any kind of acute symptoms, a fever, cough or recent exposure to an infected person should not participate in adoration.

- **Guidelines for the Sacrament of Reconciliation:** The following practices should be employed by confessors:
 - Continue the practice of not using confessionals or reconciliation rooms if possible
 - Ensure minimum distance of 6 feet between confessor and penitent. Screens impervious to droplet transmission should be used whenever possible.
 - "Drive by" and outdoor confessions may be used when practical, always taking steps to assure the privacy of the penitent.
 - Confessors and penitents should be encouraged to wear a mask over the mouth and nose.