



Diocese of Steubenville

Norms for the Resumption of Public Masses

These norms, promulgated by the Most Reverend Jeffrey M. Monforton, Bishop of Steubenville, have been prepared in consultation with clergy and laity, after review of norms and practices in other dioceses and organizations, especially the *Guidelines on Sacraments and Pastoral Care* prepared by the Thomistic Institute.

General

- The dispensation from the obligation to participate in Mass remains in effect.
- Those faithful who are in at-risk groups, those who care for people in at-risk groups, and those who have any symptoms of sickness at all are most strongly encouraged not to go to Mass.
- Social distancing of 6 feet is to be maintained (including in the nave, the processional / recessional, sanctuary, sacristy, entrances to restrooms, etc.).
 - Families/households do not have to do this social distancing amongst themselves because they already live together. However, there is to be social distancing between such a household unit and other families/households/individuals.
- If possible, keep doors open to eliminate unnecessary touching and allow for better air circulation.
- Facilities that are in use, especially highly-touched items (e.g., pews, door knobs, rails, etc.) are to be cleaned with disinfectant/cleaning solution following each liturgy.
- If possible, have hand sanitizer available at the entrances. Due to shortages of products, this may not be possible. If the parish cannot provide the sanitizer, encourage people to bring their own with them to use.
- The faithful are strongly encouraged to wear face masks, which can be temporarily removed for the reception of Holy Communion. Priests and deacons should not wear masks during the celebration of the liturgy.
- There are to be no special gatherings following Mass (e.g., donuts). People should not congregate in the narthex or outside church; social distance is to be maintained at all times.
- Holy water fonts are to remain empty. There may be dispensers of holy water available so that the faithful may of their own accord fill bottles to take holy water home with them.
- Hymnals, missalettes, and other materials should be removed from the pews and stored.
- Water used for the sprinkling rite or baptisms is to be poured into the sacrarium or the ground.

- Cry rooms may be closed, at the discretion of the pastor.
- Priests, deacons, and other ministers should thoroughly clean their hands immediately before and after Mass, and they are to avoid touching their faces during Mass.

Seating

- A church may not exceed occupancy of more than 50% of seating capacity.
 - Once capacity is reached, ushers are to kindly refrain from admitting more people into the church.
- To ensure social distancing in the pews, there are two options:
 - Close off every other pew with tape or rope
 - Alternating the open pews between the opposite side of pews is recommended.
 - Implement a “red, white, and blue” system
 - For example, if there are 3 Sunday Masses, pews with “red” tape are seating for the first Mass, “white” tape for the second Mass, and “blue” tape for the third Mass.
- Social distancing is to be maintained in the sanctuary seating for priests, deacons, and other ministers such as servers.

The Mass in General

- Consider shortened processional and recessional routes if possible
- Mass should not be unnecessarily prolonged so as to avoid people being in a social setting for too long and to allow sufficient time for cleaning of the church between Masses. As such, briefer homilies, less music, and other issues are to be taken into consideration. However, the integrity of the liturgy is to be strictly respected and no required parts of the Mass may be omitted.
- Consider having the *Missal* placed on a missal stand on the altar or on a stand at the presidential chair for the presidential prayers.
- Either a deacon, server, or the priest himself is to take the *Missal*, vessels, and cruets to the altar. If a deacon or server does this, the priest is to remain at the chair until the other minister leaves the altar.
- The lavabo is to be done by the priest himself either at a table placed near the altar or on the side of the altar itself.
- There is to be no offertory procession. The bread and wine for the Mass are to be placed on the credence table in the sanctuary.
- A second corporal is to be placed to the side of the principal corporal on which are to be placed the hosts to be consecrated for the distribution to the faithful. Only the host and chalice for the priest celebrant are to be placed on the principal corporal.
- The physical exchange of the sign of peace is to be omitted.
- At the priest’s discretion, the priest, without the assistance of the deacon, may elevate both the paten and chalice at the elevation for the doxology.
- At the conclusion of Mass, in greeting the faithful, the priest should do so outside while maintaining social distancing.

Distribution of Holy Communion

- The Precious Blood is not to be distributed to deacons or the faithful.
 - If there are concelebrating priests, the concelebrants should receive the Precious Blood by intinction with the principal celebrant consuming the remaining Precious Blood after the concelebrants have communicated.
 - For those with celiac disease, low gluten hosts are to be consecrated.
- Pastors may consider one of the following options for the distribution of Holy Communion to the faithful:
 - The communion procession with social distancing maintained in the procession;
 - Communion distributed at the altar rail with social distancing maintained;
 - The priest, deacon, or extraordinary ministers taking Communion to the faithful in their pews by utilizing the space of the empty pews.
- After the priest has communicated and before distributing Holy Communion, he should purify his fingers in an ablution cup to remove any particles of the Host. He then should discreetly purify his hands with hand sanitizer.
- Deacons and extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion should discreetly cleanse their hands with hand sanitizer before beginning to distribute Communion.
- For this temporary period only, given the health risk posed to priests in the at-risk categories, the priest may choose to be seated after communicating the deacon and extraordinary ministers while the deacon and extraordinary minister distribute Holy Communion. This temporary option is for only those priests who are in at-risk categories, and the priest is to notify his dean if this provision is being utilized.
- No one may distribute Holy Communion wearing gloves, and no one may receive Holy Communion in the hand wearing gloves.
- During this time, the faithful are strongly encouraged to receive Holy Communion in the hand. However, liturgical law allows the faithful to choose to receive either in the hand or on the tongue.
 - Pastors should help to better catechize the faithful on the importance of how to properly receive Holy Communion so that the possibility of the minister touching the communicant may be reduced:
 - If the faithful receive Communion in the hand, they should hold their hands at chest level and fully open their hand.
 - If the faithful receive Communion on the tongue, they should tilt their heads back and extend their tongue.
- Following the distribution of Communion, priests, deacons, and extraordinary ministers should purify their hands in an ablution cup and then discreetly cleanse their hands with hand sanitizer.
- Either the priest or deacon may purify the sacred vessels as usual. If a priest is an at-risk category and does not feel comfortable doing so (and for these priests only) and no deacon or instituted acolyte is present, for this temporary period only, an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion who distributed Communion may purify the vessels. For this temporary option to be done properly, the pastor must properly train the extraordinary minister on the proper method of purification. The priest is to notify his dean if this option is being utilized. The priest should nonetheless purify the vessels he used at the Mass.

Music

- Because of social distancing requirements, it may not be possible to have a full choir. In such a situation, an organist or other musician and cantor are sufficient.
- The fact that the congregation will not have access to hymnals is to be taken into consideration in planning music.

Collection

- There is to be no passing of a collection basket or ushers taking the collection using baskets on handles.
- Collection boxes are to be established at specific locations and the faithful made aware of the locations so they may make their offerings when entering or leaving the church.
- For security purposes, an usher or other person is to be assigned to be near the collection sites.