

GUIDELINES FOR GOD'S PEOPLE RETURNING TO CHURCH

As we prepare to re-open churches, please be aware of the following guidelines. We recognize that they may be awkward/uncomfortable and contrary to our culture of hospitality and community. In working to foster a safe environment for all, we thank you in advance for your patience and co-operation.

Churches are limited to a 30 percent capacity. This means Parishes may have to limit the number of people attending Mass.

Before coming to church:

Please care for your own health. Anyone attending any liturgical celebration does so at their own risk.

Please check temperature of all family members before coming to church. If any family members have a fever, please remain home for the health and safety of all. Consult your family doctor.

If you exhibit any of the following symptoms, please remain home at this time - cough, fatigue, loss of appetite, shortness of breath, muscle aches, loss of taste or smell, headache, runny nose, sore throat, chills with shakes.

Attendees and volunteers from demographic groups that are at a great risk of serious illness, such as people 65 years of age or older and individuals with chronic medical conditions, are encouraged to stay safe by avoiding public gatherings, but not prohibited from attending these liturgical celebrations if they so choose.

The use of masks and face coverings are recommended but not mandatory at this time. Parishioners must provide their own masks or face coverings.

Arriving at church

Maintain physical distancing at all times – 2 metres (6 feet) from others – in the parking lot, church entrance and in church itself.

Upon arrival, put on mask/face covering before entering church.

Parishes will likely be using one entrance only – it may not be the entrance you are familiar with. Follow direction of volunteers, signage as appropriate.

Sanitize hands upon entry and regularly wherever possible.

Pews and aisles will be marked to note physical distancing requirements. Most likely, every second row of pews will be left empty. You will not be able to sit where you wish or where you normally do. Families and households living at the same residence may sit together; the same 2 meters (6 feet) distance should be maintained concerning others. Follow direction of ushers for seating.

Pews will be emptied of prayer books, hymnals, etc. You may bring your own missal or prayer book, as long as you take it home with you.

Parish bulletins will not be published at this time.

Holy Water fonts will be empty and not in use at this time.

If your church hall is used for overflow purposes, it will also be marked for physical distancing – same guidelines apply.

Celebration of the Eucharist

Please listen carefully to announcements before the start of Mass. Follow directions as advised.

Altar Servers, Lectors will be kept to an absolute minimum during this period of time. Please do not enter the sacristy unless you have been asked to assist during Mass.

Other than a Cantor or choir appropriately physically distanced, there will be no singing at Mass until further notice.

There will be no offertory procession or collection. Please leave donation in the designated basket upon entry/departure as directed.

Please do not hold hands or shake hands during any portion of the celebration of the Eucharist. At the Sign of Peace, a nod or bow to others is appropriate.

If a mask/face covering is worn during the Mass, it should be removed prior to reception of Holy Communion and may be put back on after consumption.

During this time of pandemic and under the guidance of local medical health officials, the faithful are asked to receive Holy Communion in the hand by placing one on top of the other, allowing the Eucharistic Minister to safely place the Body of Christ in one's hand without contact. Since each communicant has the right to receive Communion either on the tongue or in the hand, those wishing to receive on the tongue should receive Communion after all others. The Priest or Communion Minister should sanitize their fingers in case the tongue or face of the communicant is touched.

Follow direction of ushers for Communion flow ensuring physical distancing at all times

Follow direction provided for dismissal and departure – exits may be different than those you are accustomed to.

Following Mass, please depart the church so that cleaning may commence. While it is our nature to congregate/socialize in the foyer or parking lot, we ask you NOT to do so at this time. Please maintain physical distancing.

General

If you suddenly feel ill, start coughing or sneezing, please leave the church for the health and safety of others gathered.

Children's ministry, prayers groups and other ministries that gather in the church/church grounds are either suspended or operating virtually only at this time.

Please use washrooms only if absolutely necessary. One person or family at a time should be in the washroom. Ensure that all wash their hands with warm, soapy water after using washroom facilities. Please respect physical distancing outside the washroom.

If, within 14 days of attending Mass, you learn that you or someone in your family who attended Mass with you has tested positive for COVID-19, you are asked to: a) contact the Ontario Public Health Authority; and, b) contact the parish office. Your identity will not be revealed to anyone other than the Public Health Authority, and only to ensure that any spread is contained.

Note: If you have a Catholic neighbour who does not have internet, please print a copy and place it in their mailbox.