

## DIOCESE OF OAKLAND

### PROTOCOL FOR RESUMING PUBLIC MASSES

As people of faith, we must always be aware of the importance of acting in a socially responsible way, to give good example to others, and to act with charity toward all. Everything possible should be done to provide the church's sacramental life in a timely and reasonable way. The current situation remains dangerous and fragile, and civil law varies within our two counties. While much has been achieved, there remains the potential that the gains could be lost by a second more virulent wave.

Our first consideration is the spiritual and physical health of the faithful and those whom they encounter, especially the most vulnerable—the elderly and those with chronic illness. We must rely on medical professionals and governmental standards to inform our decisions.

#### General Guidelines/Recommendations

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The dispensation from the obligation to attend Sunday and Holy Day Masses continues until further notice. Although the faithful are dispensed from their obligation to attend Mass, they 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). The obligation to receive Holy Communion in the Easter Season is dispensed in this diocese, this year. Out of an abundance of caution for those at high risk, the dispensation from attending Sunday Mass continues even after public Masses resume.

The faithful might be encouraged to attend a weekday Mass with smaller crowds. Priests are encouraged to use Sunday Mass texts on weekdays, when permissible. When the calendar permits, priests may continue using the *Mass in the Time of Pandemic* with the Eucharistic Prayer for Various Needs and Occasions IV: Jesus Who Went About Doing Good.

Those who are at higher risk of COVID-19 (e.g., those who are sixty-five and older or who have underlying health conditions) are to continue staying at home. Likewise, anyone with a temperature, 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.

Clergy and lay ministers are encouraged to be tested for COVID-19 where this is possible.

A priest, deacon, or other minister with a respiratory infection of any kind should not distribute Communion. Priests who are not comfortable distributing communion, by reason of age or health, should feel free to delegate that to another minister.

At this time, the number of Extraordinary Ministers should be kept to a minimum to assure strict adherence to required protocol.

45 Parishes should continue to livestream Masses if feasible or direct parishioners to a website listing of  
46 livestream links, even after public Masses resume.

47  
48 Written parental permission is required if minors are serving at a Mass that is being live streamed.  
49 (Permission form attached)

50  
51 Parishes are not to hold events before or after Mass. Areas that might attract gatherings (e.g. where  
52 “coffee hour” would normally take place) should be locked.

53  
54 In order to resume public Masses, each parish is required to prepare a **Parish Reopening Plan** and  
55 submit it to the Office of the Bishop. Then, continued robust communication is essential to keep  
56 parishioners apprised of the evolving conditions.

57 Ushers are critical for social distancing to work and need to be thoroughly trained in crowd  
58 management. They will be the ones to assure people are seated and dismissed properly, guide the  
59 communion process, and determine when capacity has been reached. Parishioners are to follow  
60 directions of ushers before and during Mass. If the usher pool is limited, perhaps high school students,  
61 confirmandi, and groups like the Knights of Columbus could be trained and called into service.

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## 64 **Physical Arrangements and Procedures**

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65 All faithful able to do so are asked to bring their own hand sanitizer and mask. Churches will provide a  
66 limited supply of masks and hand sanitizer if it is possible.

67  
68 ~~Statues, door handles, items of devotion that may be touched, need to be disinfected after every Mass.~~  
69 ~~Each parish is to identify an established volunteer core to assist in doing this. See the link for CDC~~  
70 ~~cleaning guidelines. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/reopen-guidance.html>~~

71  
72 Signage should be posted at entrances to the church, alerting people to the safety protocols to be  
73 observed, particularly the use of face covering and the six-foot social distancing rule.

74  
75 Doors must be propped open as people come and leave. If practical, post “Entrance Only and “Exit Only”  
76 signs.

77  
78 The six-foot distance rule must be strictly enforced—taping off every-other pew, for instance. Place tape  
79 on the floor to ensure proper distance in the Communion line. Members of a single household do not  
80 need to practice physical distancing with each other and so may sit together in the same row.

81  
82 “Cry Rooms” should be closed and locked.

83  
84 Holy water fonts are to remain empty.

85  
86 Masses held inside of church should be kept short, not rushed, but kept to 30 to 40 minutes, if possible.  
87 Masses can also be held in an alternative site such as a parish hall, in which case the Mass times should  
88 be staggered in order to avoid outdoor crowding when people arrive and leave. Alternative sites must  
89 comply with the same guidelines. The scheduling of Masses will be left to the discretion of the Pastor. In  
90 anticipation of people arriving for one Mass while those at the previous Mass are still leaving the church,  
91 separate designated ports of ingress and egress should be used in order to avoid crowding.

92  
93 Congregational singing should be limited to when a liturgical action requires it (e.g., Eucharistic  
94 Acclamations, but not “Entrance Songs”). Music can be provided by one musician and one cantor and, if  
95 proper distance can be kept, a small choir.  
96

97 Given the reduced number of people at Mass due to the social distancing guidelines, a system will have to  
98 be implemented to limit the number of persons attending any given Mass. Methods such as Eventbrite or  
99 reservations can be helpful in this regard. Ushers and other volunteers will assist in ensuring that no  
100 more than the number permissible will attend each Mass. Provisions should be made to accommodate  
101 overflow in other buildings, if possible.  
102

103 Parishes will have to develop a plan for restroom use: limit the number of people who enter a restroom at  
104 the same time, and place tape on the floor outside of the restroom to indicate where people should stand  
105 in line to wait for the restroom, while maintaining a 6-foot distance from each other. It is advisable to  
106 have ushers placed at the restrooms to monitor compliance with these regulations. Restrooms will need  
107 to be regularly sanitized by properly-trained parish staff.  
108

109 At the beginning of Mass, an announcement should be made communicating the temporary liturgical  
110 alterations (e.g., no handshake at the Sign of Peace, holding hands at the Lord’s Prayer, and explaining  
111 the distribution of Holy Communion).  
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## 114 Protocol for Mass

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115 All liturgical aids (e.g., hymnals, missalettes, pencils, envelopes, etc.) are to be removed from the church  
116 and kept in storage until further notice.  
117

118 All liturgical ministers should maintain a 6-foot distance from the priest and from each other. This  
119 includes any time they may be together in the sacristy before or after Mass.  
120

121 The person preparing hosts for Mass must follow strict guideline for handling them, including using a  
122 hand sanitizer and mask.  
123

124 Liturgical ministers do not wear masks during Mass.  
125

126 All ministers must sanitize their hands before Mass.  
127

128 Processions are to be suspended at public Masses. The priest and other ministers should enter the  
129 sanctuary from the sacristy (or the most direct path the building allows).  
130

131 Use of altar servers should be limited. If possible, use a stand at the Chair instead of a server holding the  
132 missal. Or, preside from the altar.  
133

134 The offertory procession (bringing up the gifts) is omitted.  
135

136 Only long-handled baskets may be passed during the collection. If not available, receptacles for offerings  
137 should be placed in strategic locations before Mass begins. Cash should be “quarantined” for three days  
138 before counting. Those handling money, checks and envelopes must wear protective sanitation gloves  
139 and wash their hands after touching these items. Encourage (mail-in) checks and online giving.

140  
141 A deacon (if present) or a server brings the Missal, chalice, paten/ciborium, and cruets of wine and water  
142 to the altar, while the priest remains at the chair. After the deacon or server moves away, the priest goes  
143 to the altar and arranges the items on the altar.

144  
145 The lavabo should be done by the priest alone, without assistance, either at a credence table near the  
146 altar or at the side of the altar itself. The lavabo bowl should have water in it already, with the towel next  
147 to it. After he performs the lavabo, the priest should then sanitize his hands. The lavabo items should  
148 remain on the credence table and be removed by the priest after the Mass.

149  
150 Hosts to be consecrated for the Communion of the faithful are to be placed on a second corporal at some  
151 distance from the breath of the celebrant. The ciborium (or other vessel) should be covered with a pall  
152 except from the epiclesis through the words of consecration.

153  
154 For the elevation of the sacred species at “*Through him, and with him, and in him,*” if a deacon is present, he  
155 may stand alongside the priest and elevate the chalice. Since this action is brief, he need not remain 6 feet  
156 from the priest while doing so.

157  
158 At the Sign of Peace, the Deacon should omit “Let us offer each other the sign of peace” which is already  
159 optional. The Agnus Dei should begin immediately to avoid the temptation to shake hands or hug—a  
160 reverent bow will suffice and should be encouraged.

161  
162 ~~Communion is distributed only to the liturgical ministers at the usual time during the Mass. Communion~~  
163 ~~for the faithful in the pews is distributed immediately after the conclusion of the Mass, as described~~  
164 ~~below. Only the priest receives from the chalice, which he himself then purifies after distributing~~  
165 ~~Communion to the liturgical ministers.~~

166  
167 The Precious Blood is not to be distributed to the faithful. A concelebrating priest should either have his  
168 own chalice and purificator (which he himself purifies) or may self-communicate by intinction.

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## 171 **Distribution of Communion**

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

178 ~~Before Communion the priest should explain that those who desire to receive Holy Communion may do~~  
179 ~~so at the conclusion of the Mass. He may add that the faithful should maintain a 6-foot distance from each~~  
180 ~~other as they come forward for Holy Communion.~~

181  
182 ~~After giving Communion to the liturgical ministers, the priest leaves the ciborium/ciboria on the altar,~~  
183 ~~covered, on top of a corporal.~~

184  
185 ~~After the concluding blessing and the dismissal, the priest (and deacon,) remain in the sanctuary, while~~  
186 ~~the other liturgical ministers return to the sacristy. At the chair, the priest removes his chasuble and the~~

187 ~~deacon his dalmatic. The purpose of removing the chasuble or dalmatic is to mitigate exposure to the~~  
188 ~~vestments and minimize laundering.~~

189  
190 A small table should be placed at each Communion station, with an unfolded corporal, a bottle of hand  
191 sanitizer that is unscented, and an ablution bowl and purificator.

192  
193 ~~The priest (and any other ministers distributing Holy Communion) sanitize their hands (Holy~~  
194 ~~Communion may not be given with gloves on\*). The priest approaches the altar, holds up a single host~~  
195 ~~and says, “Behold the Lamb of God. Behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper~~  
196 ~~of the Lamb.” He then leads the people in saying: “Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only~~  
197 ~~say the word, and my soul shall be healed.” The priest (and any other ministers distributing Holy Communion)~~  
198  ~~dons a surgical mask or cloth face covering, takes the ciborium, and goes to the Communion station.~~

199  
200 The faithful should remove gloves before coming forward for Communion if they wish to receive in the  
201 hand. Ushers should allow people into the aisle pew-by-pew and assure that they maintain a 6 feet  
202 distance. The minister says, “The Body of Christ.” The communicant, still wearing the mask, receives the  
203 Host in the hand and says, “Amen.” Then the communicant steps aside, consumes the host, and then  
204 replaces the mask.

205  
206 The faithful receive Holy Communion in the normal way. If the priest senses that his fingers have made  
207 contact with a person’s hands or mouth, he should pause, place the ciborium on the corporal, cleanse his  
208 fingers in the ablution bowl and dry them on the purificator, and then use hand sanitizer (non-scented).  
209 The same holds true for extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion as well as deacons who are  
210 distributing Communion. The water in the ablution bowl should then be poured down the sacrarium (or,  
211 lacking one, poured into the ground in a place away from where people are likely to walk). He may repeat  
212 this process as often as he judges necessary during the distribution of Holy Communion. It is not  
213 necessary, however, for him to use hand sanitizer between each communicant, unless he makes actual  
214 contact.

215  
216 ~~At the conclusion of the distribution of Holy Communion, the priest (and any other ministers) return the~~  
217 ~~remaining hosts to the tabernacle and proceed to the sacristy. The faithful may depart after making a~~  
218 ~~brief prayer of thanksgiving.~~

219  
220 Priests should not greet people as they leave. It would compromise the social distancing requirement and  
221 create an unsafe bottleneck in the church.

222  
223 After the sacred vessels are purified, they should be washed after each Mass with hot water and soap.

224  
225 All sacred linens that are to be cleaned must be placed in a plastic bag.

226  
227 \* There are a number of theological and medical reasons gloves should not be worn to administer  
228 Communion. Perhaps the most important is that the person administering the sacrament cannot discern  
229 if he might have touched the hand or mouth of the communicant if he is wearing gloves. Even if he did,  
230 he would need to discard the gloves and don new ones before the next communicant.

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## 233 **Outdoor Masses and Other Services**

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234 For some parishes, it is also possible to have Mass outdoors. This is to be preferred if it can be arranged in  
235 a dignified way while maintaining the required social distancing, as outdoor space minimizes sustained  
236 exposure to the virus. As we approach pleasant weather, outdoor Masses are a good option. This will  
237 alleviate the necessity to sanitize a larger church space and serve as a viable alternative to smaller space.  
238 Care needs to be taken so that the sacred elements are protected from the weather.

239  
240 The same precautions and guidelines for indoor Masses should be followed, **including reception of**  
241 **Communion following Mass.**

242  
243 Cars should be parked in one area and the Mass should be celebrated in a different area.

244  
245 The faithful are encouraged to bring their own seating to relieve the parish from the burden of sanitizing  
246 seating. The seating arrangement is to be clearly marked and allow for proper distancing.

247  
248 The same guidelines for restroom access and sanitization as indoor Masses apply.

249  
250 Distribution of Holy Communion would follow the guidelines for indoor Mass. There is to be no  
251 distribution of Holy Communion to congregants in their vehicle.

252  
253 Vesture for outdoor or parking lot Masses should be alb, stole, and face mask—no gloves (see above).

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## 256 **Parking Lot Masses – An Interim Option**

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257 Parking lot Masses may take place with the faithful remaining in their vehicles until time for  
258 Communion. In such cases, Communion should be distributed at the usual time, *not* following Mass.

259  
260 Parking must be clearly marked and attendants need to be on duty to direct cars.

261  
262 People must leave their car to receive Communion. Appropriate distance needs to be maintained while in  
263 line for Communion.

264  
265 Under no circumstance should Communion be handed to someone inside a car.

266  
267 Those administering Communion should make certain the host is consumed. Obviously, no one may take  
268 a host home to a family member.

269  
270 Cars must not be allowed to leave the lot until Mass is over—and only at the direction of the parking  
271 attendants.

272  
273 Handling of cars and access to Communion must be very carefully planned out.

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## 276 **Communion Outside of Mass**

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277 It is better to distribute at a time other than right after a Mass that can't be attended or watched  
278 on live stream. Perhaps livestream the Saturday Mass and then distribute communion on  
279 Sunday.

**REVISED October 1<sup>st</sup> 2020 – CHANGES TO THE JUNE 12 PROTOCOL ARE MARKED IN RED**

- 280 If possible, the communicant should receive the Sacrament of Confession before coming. Reading  
281 and meditating on the Mass readings, and an Act of Contrition is another way to prepare.
- 282 If distributing Communion in a parking lot, allow occupants of perhaps three vehicles at a time to exit  
283 their car, wearing a face mask, and keeping appropriate distance.
- 284 To the assembled group, the priest or deacon raises the Host and says “Behold the Lamb of God, behold  
285 him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the Supper of the Lamb.” The  
286 communicant responds, “O Lord, I am not worthy...”
- 287 The communicants approach the minister one at a time with masks still on, and keeping appropriate  
288 distance from other communicants.
- 289 The ministers says, “The Body of Christ.” The communicant, still wearing the mask, receives the Host in  
290 the hand and says, “Amen.” Then the communicant walks a safe distance away, consumes the host, and  
291 returns to the vehicle.
- 292 When that group of communicants/cars is finished, the priest or deacon says, “May Almighty God bless  
293 you, the Father and the Son and Holy Spirit.” Then they leave and those from the next group of vehicles  
294 approaches.
- 295 If Communion is to be distributed inside the church, groups of up to ten should enter together,  
296 appropriately distanced. The same protocols outlined above are followed.
- 297 Alternatives to distributing Communion in a parking lot or inside a church include the church vestibule  
298 or perhaps the front steps.
- 299