



**Diocese of Saint John Protocols  
for the Public Celebration of Masses  
and Other Religious Services in the  
“Yellow Level” of GNB Health and Safety Measures  
Addendum to Current [Protocols Dated May 15, 2020](#)**

In the current “Yellow Level,” churches may admit “a maximum of 50% of the venue”, or the number of people that can be accommodated in the space while maintaining physical distancing between households (which includes “Steady 15”), whichever is less.

Contact tracing is required for all public events that host 50 or more people, or that provides seating. One contact per household or grouping is required (this may be provided by pre-registration or upon entry into the church). The contact information collected is to be stored for 21 days, after which it is to be destroyed. The personal information collected is to be used for contact tracing only and cannot be used or shared for any other purpose.

Parishioners are required to wear masks/face coverings when attending Mass, as well as when entering the parish office and hall. Face Shields are not a substitute for masks/face coverings. As a Church, we are to require parishioners to wear masks/face coverings throughout the duration of all indoor parish activities. Masks/face coverings are to be worn upon entering and exiting the church, and for the duration of the gathering.

For the distribution of Holy Communion, parishioners are asked to approach the priest while wearing their mask. After receiving the host they are then to move to a designated spot, 2 meters away, to consume the host, replacing their mask fully before returning to their seat. The priest is required to wear a mask/face covering, while distributing Holy Communion.

In the supporting documentation from the Province of New Brunswick it is important to note,

*“Some people are not able to wear masks for various reasons. It’s important to remember that these reasons may not always be visible to others. New Brunswickers should always treat each other with kindness, respect and understanding. Examples of people not required to wear a mask are below:*

- *Children under the age of two; (Note: between the ages of two and five, children may be able to wear a mask if supervised. This will depend on their ability to tolerate it as well as put it on and take it off.)*
- *People with a medical condition, including a mental health disorder, that prevents them from wearing a mask;*

- *Situations that include a person who is deaf or hard of hearing who relies on lip reading, clear sound or facial expressions to communicate;*
- *Performer or officiant who is performing activities that require vocalization (like talking or singing) at a faith gathering, wedding, funeral, social event, or arts and culture event.” (FAQ-Places of Worship October 17, 2020)*

It is important for those who are unable to wear masks/face coverings to maintain a 2m physical distancing and to wash or sanitize their hands frequently. Those in an active vocal role within the liturgy (priest, cantor, lector, etc.) are exempt from wearing a mask/face covering while performing these roles. Physical distancing of 4m is required while fulfilling such roles. (FAQ Places of Worship October 17, 2020)

*“Parishioners must wear masks while singing. It should be noted that singing during a pandemic is a high-risk activity. The chance of expelling drops of liquid that could contain COVID-19 increases during singing, shouting, cheering or playing wind instruments. Having a group of people singing increases the number of these small droplets. Additional risk factors include longer durations of more than 30 minutes and group singing within indoor settings.” (FAQ Places of Worship October 17, 2020).* Congregational singing at this time is permitted only while wearing a mask/face covering. Parishioners are encouraged to participate in singing at a **very moderate volume**, to engage in worship while attempting to reduce the risk of potential transmission. Choirs are permitted following the same requirements of masks/face coverings and 2m physical distancing between members of the choir who are not part of the same household. Hymnals and shared resources are not permitted.

Altar servers are now permitted. The altar servers are required to wear masks/face coverings at all times during the Mass, except for the reception of Holy Communion. The altar servers are to remain 2m away from the priest while seated. While serving the altar and during the preparation of the gifts, both the altar servers and the priest are required to wear a mask/face covering. Altar servers must maintain 2m physical distancing from one another, unless members of the same household or “Steady 15”.

Parishes are encouraged to have the distribution and reception of Holy Communion at the appropriate time during Mass. The priest is to purify and then sanitize his hands before distributing Communion to the faithful. If the distribution of Holy Communion is not feasible during Mass (due to logistics of flow of traffic), Communion immediately following the closing blessing is possible.



Most Rev. Christian Riesbeck, CC  
Bishop of Saint John

March 8, 2021