

GUIDELINES FOR THE RESUMPTION OF PUBLIC MASSES
IN THE DIOCESE OF SACRAMENTO

REVISED – MAY 26, 2020

“Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own” (Acts 4:32)

In preparation for the resumption of the public celebration of Masses in the Diocese of Sacramento, a set of guidelines has been prepared and must be applied with great prudence and diligence throughout the diocese. The guidelines, per the recommendations issued by the World Health Organization (WHO), the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and state/local authorities, respectful of, and in accord with, the established norms for celebrating Masses, provide direction for the pastors, parochial administrators, and priests of the diocese to resume the celebration of the Masses publicly in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. The guidelines are intended to ensure safety of ALL the faithful at the celebration of the Eucharist.

A. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

- 1) The decree issued by Bishop Soto on March 13, 2020, dispensing ALL the faithful from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass and Holy Days of Obligation remains in effect, including the instructions provided in the decree. Provide guidance to the faithful on how to continue observing the third commandment, Keep Holy the Lord’s Day.
- 2) Those who fall in the vulnerable category, i.e. individuals age 65+ and persons with compromised health conditions, are asked to continue with the shelter-in-place ordinances instituted by state and local authorities. This also applies for priests, deacons, and ministers who are in the same vulnerable categories.
- 3) Physical distancing is to be observed during the celebration of Mass by every person present. Individuals living in the same household may remain close to one another but must observe social distancing with other individuals or other households. All ministers (priests, deacons, extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, lectors, altar servers, cantors, ministers of hospitality, etc.) are expected to practice social distancing at each Mass. The usual and common socialization before and after Masses must be conducted in accord with the restrictions currently in place.
- 4) A person who has a respiratory infection and may be exhibiting symptoms associated with the COVID-19 virus or otherwise is asked to refrain from coming to Mass. The same instruction applies particularly for priests, deacons and other ministers. A priest/pastor must provide proper and compassionate instructions to his parishioners regarding this important precautionary measure. A priest who is by himself in a parish/ministry and has a respiratory infection must communicate with the Vicar General in order to facilitate providing assistance and coverage for the Mass.
- 5) Sufficient means to disinfect or sanitize the location of the Mass must be available at each Mass. Every person in the celebration of the Mass must be able to sanitize themselves as

often as it is required and whenever necessary before, during, and after the Mass. The Church, hall, or other venues appropriate to celebrate the Mass must adhere to and be able to accommodate the safety recommendations provided by civil authorities, e.g. social distancing, proper ventilation, and proper entrance/exit doors.

6) Outdoor Masses and “Drive-in Style” Masses are not allowed at this time.

- 7) Pastors/Parochial Administrators are to schedule or re-schedule Masses that accommodate the necessary time to prepare for each Mass that ensure the health and safety of the parishioners, particularly the task of disinfecting the worship space. Pastors/Parochial administrators who deem necessary to celebrate Masses beyond what is prescribed must individually call the Bishop’s office for permission. Additional daily Masses are permitted, if necessary, in accord with the established norms. Encourage the faithful to attend the weekday Masses whenever possible.
- 8) Parishioners are encouraged to wear masks and gloves during the service but must take them off during Communion.
- 9) Pastors and Parochial Administrators are to provide parishioners with sufficient instructions regarding these guidelines. Pastors and Parochial Administrators should begin soon to prepare the parishioners for the gradual resumption of the public celebrations of the Masses even though the date for lifting the suspension is still not determined.
- 10) Parishes are to consider livestreaming at least one of the Masses during the weekend, if they are not already doing so.

11) Pastors and Parochial administrators must plan for a system in their respective parishes that will facilitate contact tracing in cases where there is an instance of an infection, be prepared to inform the diocese, local health authorities, and the parishioners.

12) Priests and deacons are advised to be tested for COVID-19. Testing is now more readily available for those who are asymptomatic. Check with the local county public health agency.

B. PREPARING THE FACILITIES

1) Each pastor or parochial administrator must carefully review the Church or facility where the Mass will be celebrated in light of the general principles provided.

a) Calculate as accurately as possible the capacity of the church or facility that will comply with the physical distancing standards and other safety restrictions. **Current guidelines propose as a standard the lower number of either 25% of building capacity or a maximum of 100 attendees.** If certain areas are to be designated for “overflow,” the same requirements are to be implemented. (e.g. extra seating in vestibule or hall). **The same calculation applies for the overflow.** Clearly mark pews or seats that cannot be occupied during the Mass. Ensuring adequate physical distancing should be the governing principle in determining suitable occupancy for the church or facility.

- The pastor or parochial administrator is to employ a system applicable to their respective parishes that will keep within the current limit on attendees. Pastors

may have parishioners signing up online or calling the office to express their intention to attend a particular Mass.

- Pastors and parochial administrators are to discern prudently what is best for the parish. Parishioners should be provided adequate orientation regarding the measures intended for their own health, safety, and comfort.

b) Entrance and exits must be clearly marked. It is highly recommended that parishes instruct parishioners to enter at one door and exit another, establishing a flow that minimizes people from running into one another before and after Mass. If possible, establish “one-way traffic” within the Church or facility.

c) Clearly marked signs must be placed throughout the Church or facilities.

d) All areas and common surfaces, e.g. pews, seats, door handles, railings, etc., are to be disinfected and cleaned after each Mass. Remind parishioners to refrain from unnecessary touching of surfaces.

e) Restrooms are to be kept clean at all times, sanitizing them after each Mass.

f) Rooms and other areas in the Church or facility must be kept locked if they are not being used during the Mass, e.g. cry rooms, choir lofts.

g) Hand sanitizer or any other antiseptic approved solution are to be placed at church entrances and other appropriate stations for the convenient use of the faithful.

h) Baptismal fonts and holy water stoops are to be kept empty until further notice.

i) Ensure that proper ventilation is maintained in the Church or facility. If possible, keep doors open that allows for appropriate air circulation and prevent unnecessary touching of door handles.

2) Missalettes, hymnals, and other forms of worship aids in the Church are to be removed. Eliminate or minimize items/materials (e.g. flyers, second collection envelopes, magazines, etc.) that can be deemed as a means of transmission to infect others or compromise their health.

a) A worship aid which the faithful take home may be provided. All worship aids left after Mass must be collected and disposed.

b) Hymns, readings, responses, and other aids to worship may be projected on widescreen.

3) Rooms designated as sacristies, vesting rooms, liturgy preparation rooms, etc. are to observe the same social distancing and sanitizing requirements. If possible, designate separate rooms for each.

4) Pastors/Parochial Administrators are to implement a system in the Church or facility that will comply with the social distancing requirements for the distribution of Holy Communion. Utilize clear signage to facilitate the distribution.

5) The Church or facility must be cleaned and sanitized thoroughly after each Mass.

C. PREPARATION FOR THE LITURGY

1) Preparing Items for the Mass

a) Ensure that the hosts, wine, vessels, cruets, books, and other items pertinent to the celebration of the Mass are prepared ahead of time and handled by a minimal number of individuals as possible, following proper sanitizing procedures.

- b) It is recommended that smaller 2.5 inch host be used and consumed by the presider and concelebrants.
- c) In the event that there is another priest concelebrant for the Mass, provide an additional chalice with purificator for the concelebrant's individual use. Communion by intinction may be an option in the event there is another priest concelebrant besides the presider.
- d) Ensure that vessels and other items used for Mass are properly sanitized before and after Mass. Do not reuse linens and hand towels.

2) Ministers at Mass

All ministers must sanitize before and after Mass. Whenever necessary, sanitize during the Mass. The numbers of ministers are to be limited as much as possible to what is necessary for the celebration of the Mass. It is not recommended that ministers wear masks and gloves in the sanctuary while presiding, concelebrating or serving at Mass. **However, ministers of Holy Communion are to wear masks DURING the distribution of the Body of Christ.**

a) Priests/Deacons

- It is encouraged that priests/deacons vest in a separate room from other ministers. Avoid crowding in the sacristy with other ministers as much as possible.
- Only one deacon should assist at Mass.
- **Wear a mask DURING the distribution of the Body of Christ.**

b) Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

- Ensure that EMHCs are properly instructed regarding the distribution of Holy Communion
- If an EMHC is assigned to prepare the items for Mass, they must be instructed on the proper sanitary procedures.
- If an EMHC is to distribute communion in an overflow area, the same instruction and proper sanitation procedure applies.
- **Wear a mask DURING the distribution of the Body of Christ.**

c) Lectors

- Ensure that the Lectionary is sanitized accordingly.

d) Altar Servers

- Servers are encouraged to vest in a separate room from the priests and deacons. In cases where this is not possible, social distancing principles apply.
- Only one server is to serve during the Mass. In cases where social distancing is not possible, having an altar server at Mass can be omitted.

e) Cantors/Musicians

- Utilize a single Cantor or Musician for the Mass. No choirs.
- If there is to be both a cantor and a musician, social distancing is to be employed accordingly.
- Cleaning and sanitizing procedures are to be observed for musical instruments (i.e. organ or piano keyboard, cantor stand, etc.) between Masses.
- If live-streaming the Mass, always respect copyrights for printed or mechanical reproduction. Consider also the use of traditional or well-known hymns that the faithful can easily sing without the use of a hymnal.

f) Ministers of Hospitality

- Ministers of Hospitality are to be given proper instructions regarding places of entry, exit, and seating arrangements, etc.
- It is recommended that each wear masks and gloves

- Pastors/Parochial Administrators are to ensure that all the ministers at Mass are given proper instructions on the health and safety measures required for the celebration of the liturgy.

g) Environment and Liturgical Season

- It is important that the Mass keep with the movement of the liturgical seasons but consider keeping the decorations to a minimum, lessening surfaces for the virus to be transmitted.

D. THE CELEBRATION OF THE MASS

1) Introductory Rites

a) Restrict the entrance procession to the Priest(s) and Deacon. The server is to process with the priest and deacon.

b) Process in through the most direct route to the sanctuary. Omit processing through the nave. Only the presider is to venerate the altar in the customary manner.

c) The seats of the priests, deacons and server must maintain social distancing requirements.

d) During the Collect or Opening Prayer, the presider can use a stand for the missal, by the presider's chair, or do it on the altar.

2) Liturgy of the Word

a) One lector is sufficient for the celebration of the Mass.

b) The cantor must remain in their place for the responsorial psalm, gospel acclamation, and not sing them from the ambo.

c) The deacon must maintain appropriate social distance for the blessing prior to the proclamation of the Gospel. Omit the procession of the Gospel Book to the ambo.

d) The priest/deacon is to deliver the homily from the ambo, in accord with the norms of the liturgy.

3) Preparation of the Gifts and Offertory

a) Parishes are to refrain from the usual methods of collection. A basket or box must be placed at a convenient and secure location where parishioners are to place their offertory as they come in for or leave Mass. Encourage online giving methods.

b) The gifts of bread and wine are not to be presented in the usual manner. These should already be on the credence table.

c) The deacon assists the presider in the usual manner, mindful of the social distancing guidelines.

d) The ciborium containing the host for distribution is to be placed in an area of the altar away from the presider, and on a separate corporal, when he prays the Eucharistic Prayer and be consecrated accordingly.

e) If there is to be a concelebrant during the Mass, an additional chalice must also be prepared and placed in the same manner as the ciborium with the hosts for the people. Intinction may be option in this case. In this case only one chalice is necessary.

f) The lavabo may be done by the priest alone, without assistance, either at a credence table near the altar or at the side of the altar itself and use hand sanitizers.

4) Eucharistic Prayer

a) At the Doxology, the presider is to elevate the paten and chalice by himself.

b) It is recommended that the presider prays the entire Eucharistic Prayer.

5) Distribution of Holy Communion

- a) The omission of the exchange of the sign of peace is still enforced.
- b) During the Lamb of God, the presider distributes the Body of the Christ to the other concelebrant(s). Concelebrants are to consume the Blood of Christ from a separate chalice, unless they receive communion by intinction.
- c) Only the priests are to receive the Blood of Christ.
- d) The Altar Server and EMHCs are to receive communion while maintaining social distancing guidelines.
- e) The Ministers of Communion and EMHC must ensure that social distancing is observed as planned. The ministers of hospitality/ushers are to assist in the process.
 - a. **It is highly recommended that priests instruct that the faithful are to receive the Body of Christ on the hand. Parishioners are to remove masks and gloves before approaching the minister. If communion is received by a parishioner on the tongue, sanitize as often as necessary, and especially whenever there is direct contact with the communicant. The priest may instruct those wishing to receive communion on the tongue to approach communion at the end of the communion procession.*
- f) The restriction on the distribution of the Blood of Christ to the faithful is still enforced, including by intinction.
- g) Priests should make arrangements for those desiring gluten free hosts.
- h) At the end of the distribution of Holy Communion, the unconsumed Body of Christ is gathered together and reserved in the tabernacle.
- i) The presider alone is to purify the vessels at the credence table or the altar. Concelebrants are to purify their own chalices. The deacon may assist in returning the vessels and linens back to the credence table, after the presider and priests have purified the vessels. If necessary, the purification of the vessels after Mass is an option. Do not forget to sanitize again after the distribution of communion.
- j) For the Prayer After Communion, proceed as with the Collect or Opening Prayer.

6) Recessional

- a) The Presider, Concelebrants, Deacon, and Altar servers are to recess to the most direct route to the Sacristy. Only the presider is to venerate the altar in the customary manner.
- b) The people are to be instructed to maintain social distancing as they walk out the designated exit routes.
- c) The pastor, parochial administrator, priest, and deacon must set the example for appropriate social distancing and avoid unnecessary socializing after each Mass.