

Updated October 20, 2020

Guidelines for Observing Social Distancing and other Health Requirements for the Celebration of ALL Masses

Before Mass

1. All four Diocesan Bishops of Missouri have dispensed the faithful from the obligation to attend Mass on Sunday; however, the faithful are encouraged to perform some other act of devotion if they are not participating in Sunday Mass, such as prayerfully reading and meditating on the Sunday readings. Therefore,
 1. Those who are symptomatic or who have been exposed to another with the virus within 14 days are not permitted to enter the church, in accordance with national, state and local health directives. All attendees are asked to check their temperature at home before coming to church.
 2. Those who are at risk because of an underlying health issue or who are 60 or older are strongly encouraged, for their own health, to avoid the risk of attending public celebrations of the Mass.
 3. We highly encourage parishes to live stream Mass, even on a daily basis, so that those unable to attend in person may maintain a spiritual connection with their local church.
2. Appropriate cleaning of high use areas within the church **and *ad experimentum*: a basement, gym, adjacent space**, is to be done before and after each service.
 1. The pews utilized by the assembly shall be wiped down with disinfectant.
 2. ***Permission ad experimentum* is given through Christmas Day Masses for the use of a church basement, gym, adjacent indoor space to be utilized as additional seating capacity during Masses and liturgical events. These chairs are to likewise be separated for six-foot distancing and disinfected before and after services. Outdoor venues and vehicles are not approved.**

3. All hymnals and missalettes are to be removed from the pews and stored for the duration of the pandemic. No other materials may be left in the pews. The faithful are encouraged to bring their own missals or hymnals or smartphones for use during the celebration of Mass.
4. Restroom facilities and door handles, push plates, and knobs are to be sanitized after each service.
3. Holy water fonts are to remain empty until further notice.
4. Hand sanitizer is to be made available throughout the church, whenever possible.
5. The faithful are obliged to wear a mask upon entering the church and during the celebration of Mass, *except when remaining in the pew* unless the local city/county health directives so require and for the brief moment of receiving Holy Communion. Ushers and other volunteers are to wear masks and gloves (when gloves are not available, frequent handwashing will be necessary) throughout the celebration of Mass. Pastors are to see to it that these obligations are enforced without exception. Those at the altar are to wear a mask if distributing Holy Communion.
6. Clergy and other ministers are to maintain six-foot distancing, including in the sanctuary, and should not greet parishioners as they enter the church.

During Mass

1. **Entry and exit doors** are to be adequately designated and monitored. Entry doors are to be propped or held open before Mass (**this may become more necessary during the fall/winter months**), and exit doors are to be propped or held open at the end of Mass to prevent people from touching the door handles, knobs or push plates.
2. Staff, ushers or other volunteers should assist with directing people to pews specifically marked. **Attendance may be limited** to assure compliance with social distancing requirements.
3. **Households are to maintain six-foot distancing** between their family and other families or individuals with whom they do not reside throughout the celebration of Mass.
 1. Seating is to be arranged such that six feet of distance can be maintained between members of one household and members of another.

2. One or two pews are to be left vacant in between congregants such that six feet of distance can be maintained in all directions.
3. Music ministers are to maintain six-foot social distancing; **if cantor/choir member singing, ten-foot distance is necessary.**
4. Due to concerns that congregational singing requires increased volumes of projected air and particulates, priests and **congregational singing could remain suspended at Masses for the time being.** **However, congregational singing can now be offered by those who sing softly in a low voice with the requirement that one's mask is on, even when one is in one's pew.** Other options should be considered such as using a single cantor who sings antiphons or hymns at least at the entrance and communion of the Mass, appropriate instrumental music, and smaller choirs and scholas which are able to maintain a social distance of ten feet.
4. **Procession of the Gifts is suspended.** Collection baskets (or any other materials) are not to be passed from one family to another, ~~nor shall ushers take up the collection from the congregation.~~ Stationary baskets **may** be used for donations from the assembly and are to be monitored by the ushers until the donations are collected and handled according to the proper protocols in place for handling the collection. **Ushers wearing masks and gloves or sanitizing one's hands before and after may take up the collection with long handled baskets from the aisles.**
5. **The sign of peace is optional.** If it is offered, there is to be no physical contact. A simple gesture, such as a nod of the head, is recommended.
6. All **concelebrating priests** are to receive Holy Communion by intinction, utilizing a separate chalice from the main celebrant and with the last priest communicant consuming all that remains in the Chalice.
7. Priests or deacons who are in at-risk groups are permitted to refrain from distributing Holy Communion and are able to delegate distribution to other Communion ministers.
8. For the **distribution of communion**, ushers or other volunteers who are masked and gloved will ensure six-foot distancing in the

communion line. Floor markings shall be placed six feet apart in the aisles in which the congregation approaches the sanctuary for communion to facilitate proper social distancing.

9. If any **server** is next to the Communion Minister holding a paten during the distribution of Holy Communion, the server must also wear a mask at that time.
10. **Communion ministers** must be masked, sanitize their hands immediately before and after distributing Communion, and when at all possible, to utilize a disinfectant wipe or purificator dipped in a sanitizing solution (at least 60% ethanol or 70% isopropyl alcohol) to sanitize their fingers when incidental contact is made with the communicant.
11. **Distribution of Holy Communion from the chalice is prohibited** to the assembly and vested deacons. For those who are gluten intolerant, special arrangements are to be **considered** with the pastor.
12. Maintaining a single-file is necessary for the distribution of Holy Communion for each Communion minister and communicant to maintain social distancing. Multiple Communion ministers may be used as long as one-way traffic patterns are observed. In some few parishes, the Communion minister may move through the unoccupied pews in front of potential communicants instead of a procession line. Admittedly, this could burden the conscience of a person before whom the Communion minister stands, but it is an acceptable alternative.
13. During this time, **Holy Communion should be distributed in the hand** in keeping with the advice of state health officials and thereby to avoid the Communion minister's fingers coming into contact with saliva or airborne contagion. This might be a good occasion to review proper reception with parishioners: "When receiving in the hand, the communicant should be guided by the words of St. Cyril of Jerusalem: 'When you approach, take care not to do so with your hand stretched out and your fingers open or apart, but rather place your left hand as a throne beneath your right, as befits one who is about to receive the King. Then receive him, take care that nothing is lost.'" (*Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Communion Under Both Kinds in the Dioceses of the United States of America, no. 41*). Reception of Holy Communion in the hand is an ancient and

reverent option the faithful are asked to adopt during this time. Our bishop is not forbidding anything permitted in Church law which does grant the faithful the right to receive Communion on the tongue.

14. Should person(s) insist on receiving **Holy Communion on the tongue**, this should take place **after all in the congregation who are receiving in the hand have received** per the directives. In other words, no one insisting on receiving on the tongue should precede those receiving in the hand. Additionally, Communion ministers must sanitize their hand if there is contact with the communicant's tongue, face, hand, or breath before distributing Holy Communion to the next communicant. This can be arranged by having purification materials, e.g., disinfectant wipe/sanitizer, nearby in the event it is necessary as the possibility of transferring any contagion is to be mitigated for the benefit of everyone's health.
15. Those who refrain from receiving communion still unite themselves with the sacrifice of Christ. Non-communicants are kindly asked to remain in their places rather than process to request a blessing—a blessing all receive at the end of Mass.
16. When approaching the Communion minister, the communicant **receives the Host in one's hand, takes a single step to the side away from the Communion minister, and pulls down their** mask below their chin in order to receive Communion **and not breathe on the Communion minister**. The communicant immediately replaces their mask after consuming the Host.

After Mass

1. Family units/individuals should depart the church in an organized manner wearing masks and observing six feet of distance between other households. Ushers or clergy may need to direct this process.
2. Ushers, **wearing masks and gloves, may extend one's arm for as much distance as possible to** hand out bulletins or other materials.
3. Clergy and other ministers are not to greet parishioners as they exit the church.
4. There are to be no receptions or social gatherings (e.g., coffee and doughnuts) following Mass.
5. Pews and other high traffic areas of the church are to be wiped down before the next service, with the removal of trash and other items from the pews.