



# ARCHDIOCESE OF NASSAU

Office of the Archbishop

May 31, 2020 - Pentecost Sunday

Beloved in Christ,

## **Detailed Guidelines for the Gradual Resumption of Public Worship**

As we gradually resume the public celebration of Mass and the Sacraments, the following Guidelines are intended to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all the faithful and to follow the protocols established by the public health authorities.

1. All current health precautions required by the Ministry of Health are to be observed.
2. Face coverings are to be worn by the faithful in and around the church.
3. The cleaning and sanitizing of the church facilities utilizing proper techniques are to take place before or after each Mass.
4. The rules of physical distancing (social distancing) are to be practiced inside the church and on the church property.
5. Provisions should be made for parishioners to sanitize their hands before entering the church.
6. Parish churches are not to exceed 20-30 percent of the total capacity of the church.
7. All non-liturgical gatherings should continue to be suspended.
8. The dispensation from the Obligation to attend Sunday Mass, granted on March 18, 2020, remains in effect until further notice.

## **GUIDELINES FOR RESUMPTION OF PUBLIC MASSES**

### **Frequency of Masses**

Priests are permitted to celebrate the Eucharist twice on weekdays and three times on Sundays, if required, given the current circumstances.

## **General Information**

1. Those older than 65 years of age with a compromised health condition are advised to stay at home. Anyone who is ill, has a temperature or cough should stay at home for the good of all.
2. Clergy and other Liturgical Ministers who have respiratory infections of any kind should avoid public celebration of the Mass and the Sacraments.

## **Seating and Physical Distancing**

1. Each parishioner should wear a cloth mask.
2. Hand Sanitizers should be made available near the entrance of the church.
3. The number of persons permitted inside the church at one time must be limited to ensure that the requirements of social distancing can be achieved.
4. Pews should be roped off to allow for physical distancing.
5. The Priest and other ministers of the altar should remain 6 feet apart at all times.
6. Parishes should have the proper signage to indicate where people are to stand for communion to ensure proper spacing between individuals.
7. Parishes should have the maximum fresh air circulating in the building during worship. Air-conditioning should **not** be used at this time.
8. Doors should be propped open to avoid frequent handling of door knobs.
9. The verbal exchange at the reception of Communion should take place 6 feet away from the Minister of Communion.

## **Matters particular to the Liturgy**

1. All vessels used for Mass should be cleaned with soap and warm water.
2. Hand sanitizers are to be made available in the sanctuary.
3. Ministers and altar servers in the entrance procession should be few in number, single file and 6 feet apart.
4. A stand at the presider's chair or even on the altar, to hold the Roman Missal for the presidential prayers should be used instead of having an altar server hold the Missal.
5. The use of collection baskets is suspended until further notice.
6. Collection points (e.g. drop boxes) should be provided for the faithful to deposit their offerings before or after Mass.

7. The offertory procession is to be omitted.
8. Physical contact such as handshaking during the Sign of Peace and holding hands during the recitation of the Our Father is temporarily suspended.
9. Holy water stoops and baptismal fonts are to remain empty.
10. With regards to music the following is to be considered:
  - a. According to the health experts, singing produces 6 to 10 times more droplets from our mouths than speaking.
  - b. Singing should be kept to a minimum.
  - c. The need to wear facemask and face covering will render congregational singing impractical.
  - d. Choir members must be kept to a minimum. This may require the use of a single cantor.
  - e. The entrance hymn, responsorial psalm and the communion hymn should be sufficient. Instrumental music is appropriate as the assembly disperses.
11. All hymnals and missalettes are to be removed from the Church.
12. Given seating limitations parishes should clearly designate where seating is permitted. The use of alternate pews is advised.

### **Distribution of Holy Communion**

1. At the beginning of Mass and again prior to the distribution of Communion, the priest should explain how Holy Communion will be distributed.
2. The Ciborium containing the host to be consecrated should be placed on the corner of the altar.
3. If the Celebrant of the Mass is in a higher-risk category, a different priest, deacon or Extraordinary Minister of the Eucharistic may distribute Communion.
4. The Celebrant is to sanitize his hands immediately after receiving Communion and prior to distributing Communion.
5. The Priest and Eucharistic ministers are to sanitize their hands before and after the distribution of the Eucharist.
6. During the distribution of communion should a minister make contact with the faithful they should sanitize their hands immediately and before continuing.
7. Those in line for Holy Communion should maintain a six-foot distance from each other.

8. Given the current circumstances the faithful are to receive communion in the hand.
9. It may be prudent to dismiss the congregation by rows beginning with the back row.

### **Other Matters**

The Guidelines issued on March 5, 2020 remain in effect.

1. Holy Water stoops and the baptismal font should be emptied.
2. The distribution of the Precious Blood during Communion is temporarily suspended.
3. Communion is to be distributed on the hand and not on the tongue.
4. The Celebrant is to refrain from physical contact while greeting parishioners before and after Mass.
5. When entering and leaving the church, parishioners should observe social distancing.
6. CCD programs are suspended until further notice.
7. Parish Faith Formation programs should be offered digitally.

Other common practices like the entrance procession, the recessional, the use and number of altar servers, will have to be modified to protect worshippers and guard against the transmission of the COVID- 19 virus.

At this time, the dispensation from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass is still applicable. The elderly and the vulnerable are encouraged to remain at home. They are encouraged to observe the Lord's Day by spending time in prayer and participating in Mass streamed over our social media platforms.

Let us continue to pray for our families, our country and our world during these difficult times. Let us continue to look after each other, especially the most vulnerable among us.

Devotedly yours in Christ,



Most Reverend Patrick C. Pinder, S.T.D., C.M.G., K.C.\*H.S.  
Archbishop of Nassau