



In Open Air / Outdoor Masses

As we approach more pleasant weather, and given the pastoral necessity, outdoor Masses are a good alternative option to indoor Masses. This can relieve the need for parishes having to clean and sanitize the church space as often. Gathering outdoors may be of particular help for communities with small church buildings, and appropriate physical distance must still exist for those not in the same household.

The same precautions used for setting up for indoor Masses need to be followed for outdoor Masses, (e.g. washing hands beforehand, maintaining social distancing while setting up etc.).

It is permissible for every parish to offer the celebration of Mass in an outdoor venue in two possible configurations. In an appropriate outdoor venue to be designated by the pastor, including the church parking lot, an outdoor celebration of the Eucharist will be permitted. Only one of the following two configurations should be used at any one time.

First Configuration: Attending Mass outdoors in designated seats

The faithful can be seated on individual chairs, provided by the parish or supplied by individual parishioners, with social distancing requirements are strictly observed.

The “seating arrangement” should be marked in a clear fashion or with the help of ushers.

If the seats are provided by the parish, they must be appropriately sanitized after each Mass.

Second Configuration: Attending Mass outdoors remaining seated in one’s car

The faithful can remain in their cars, parked in designated spaces, in a church’s parking lot where Mass will be celebrated in a designated area.

The maximum number of cars admitted to each celebration of Mass will depend upon three factors:

- The size of the parish parking lot;
- The need to maintain six feet between parked cars;
- Maintaining the ability for any car to exit freely from the lot in case of emergency.

In addition to the requirements listed above, provision must be made for an orderly entrance, an orderly exit, and a centralized offertory process.

Provided that six feet of distance is maintained between parked cars, the windows of any car may remain open during the celebration of Mass.

The use of a face mask that covers both the nose and mouth by the faithful will be required for:

- Those over the age of 5 years old, and is strongly encouraged for those 2-5 years old;
- All who are seated in an outdoor venue for the celebration of Mass;
- All those who attend Mass seated in their cars and:
 - Choose to open their windows during the celebration of Mass
 - Present themselves to receive Holy Communion.

Distribution of Holy Communion

In order to ensure that Holy Communion is distributed in a safe and reverent manner, please see the separate set of protocols that were previously distributed governing both the distribution of Communion either in the hand or on the tongue.

Distribution of Holy Communion needs to be carefully planned as with an indoor Mass, ensuring proper distancing if communicants wait in line.

In cases where faithful are in their cars, the communicants should exit their cars to receive Holy Communion, one at a time. Some parishes have participants turn on their car flashers to indicate their desire to receive Communion.

Requirements for the Outdoor Celebration of Mass:

Proper Provision must be made for the audio transmission of the Mass:

For Configuration #1, an appropriate sound system must be provided for the full participation of the faithful.

It is preferred to park cars at one location or on the streets and have participants sitting in their own chairs in a different location designated for Mass. This gives the gathered assembly better visibility to see the Mass directly, without having to look through car and truck windshields. This is mitigated if there is a substantially elevated platform which allows for reasonable visibility of the altar. Please be sure to secure permission from civil authorities in your planning, both in regards to gathering size, and number of vehicles, both on and off sites.

Again, participants are encouraged to bring their own chairs, otherwise the parish will have to make provisions to sanitize parish-provided chairs.

For Configuration #2, some provision must be made for amplification or the rental/purchase of a low-band FM transmitter system that allows the audio from Mass to be broadcast on a car radio.

Any music for Mass outdoors follows the guidelines already in effect.

A centralized process for taking up the collection must be created that avoids any passing of a basket or interchange between ushers and congregants. A central depository can be established that will require each member attending to place their donation directly within it.

During the celebration of outdoor Mass:

- The Church building must be secured and monitored;
- Eucharistic adoration cannot be offered within the Church while any Mass is celebrated outdoors
- The bathrooms of the Church may remain open.

Liturgical Considerations for the outdoor celebration of Mass:

An appropriate altar must be set up in a suitable place. Care needs to be taken so that the sacred elements are protected from weather.

All vessels to be used at Mass must be sanitized before and after Mass.

During the outdoor celebration of the Mass, the only persons to be present in the sanctuary are the celebrant, concelebrating priest(s), deacon(s), the cantor.

The celebrant will not be required to wear a face mask during the celebration of Mass, provided he maintains proper social distancing with anyone else present in the sanctuary.

Before the distribution of Holy Communion, the celebrant and assisting clergy are required to put on a face mask.

In addition, all clergy and ministers are required to sanitize their hands before and after the distribution of Holy Communion.

The number of ministers exercising their liturgical service should be kept to a minimum.

All restrictions continue to remain in effect indefinitely. This includes:

- The suspension of the distribution of the cup;
- No physical contact during the exchange of the sign of peace;
- All worship aids must be disposable and discarded after each Mass;
- Hymnals are not permitted to be distributed or used.

Please refer to the guidelines for the distribution of Holy Communion for more detailed information.