



Diocese of
OWENSBORO

GUIDELINES FOR RESUMING PUBLIC LITURGIES

I. Understandably, everyone is anxious to return to normalcy. But the threat of the coronavirus is still very much with us. Even now, some areas of the country continue to experience new cases and increased fatality rates. Physical distancing, the wearing of masks, and increased cleaning procedures will be with us for a very long time. This will certainly impact the way we worship and the rituals which are a vital part of our faith.

II. Eucharist

- Public Masses will be permitted at a limited capacity beginning May 20th. While we recognize that many are eager to return to Mass in our churches, it remains important for those who are elderly and otherwise at risk to refrain from returning to public liturgies until it is manifestly safe to do so. All the faithful continue to be dispensed from their Sunday obligation until further notice. Those who are sick must stay home. Those considered high risk and their caregivers are strongly encouraged to stay home.
- Live-streamed liturgies are of benefit to those who are homebound, sick, or otherwise vulnerable and they should be continued
- Consider if it may be possible for your parish to add additional Masses to your schedule (perhaps in the evening during weekdays) to allow for more people to attend Mass throughout the week given the limited capacity per Mass. Keep in mind that there must be a reasonable amount of time between each Mass to allow for a group to vacate the premises safely with adequate cleaning before the arrival of the next group.
- Consider the possibility of celebrating Mass in a larger space such as a parish hall or school gym where more people can participate while maintaining physical distance.
- Consider live streaming the Mass into the parish hall or school gym for people who cannot be accommodated in the worship space. Bring Holy Communion to those in the secondary space.
- Each parish presents with a variety of considerations specific to their community, building and available resources. Before opening, make a plan specific to your parish that specifies and communicates to parishioners how precautions will be carried out.

Before Mass

- Pastors and ushers should make every effort to ensure appropriate physical distancing before, during, and after liturgical celebrations. Methods will vary in light of the capacity of church buildings. Calculate your capacity for limited occupancy by multiplying .33 (33%) by the total occupancy available in your parish. For example, if you can ordinarily accommodate 300 people, 300 multiplied by .33 is 99 people that would be allowed in the building for a given Mass.
- Consider various ways of admitting a limited number of people – perhaps tickets, reservations for a particular Mass, or an online system such as Eventbrite or Eventbee.

Allow people without internet access the ability to call a certain number to make a reservation.

- Other than family/household units, worshippers should be seated six feet apart in all directions. These principles also apply to chapels and other smaller rooms on the parish campus. Map it out to determine proper spacing.
- Consider placing a stand near the presider's chair to hold the Roman Missal. This eliminates the need for the server to stand so close to the presider.
- Consider that at limited capacity, it may not be necessary to have EMHC. This could cut down on those in contact with the vessels.
- "Cry Rooms" should be closed and locked. Those parishes who utilize these spaces for families with small children should make clear that these rooms are not available.
- Anyone over the age of two attending Mass must wear a face mask. The pastor is *not* required to wear a face mask while celebrating Mass.
- If available, hand sanitizing stations should be set up. You could also encourage attendees to bring their own hand sanitizer for personal use to help conserve parish supplies.
- Baptismal fonts and holy water stoops should remain empty.
- Collection baskets should not be passed around. Consider setting up central boxes or collection points where the faithful can place their contributions. Remind parishioners about opportunities for online giving.
- Priests, deacons, and all liturgical ministers should model good hygienic practices before, during, and after Mass. Presiders, deacons, and EMHC's should continue to use hand sanitizer before Mass, before the Communion Procession, and after Mass.

During Mass

- Bread and wine should continue to be kept from public areas. Therefore, there will be no procession of gifts. The gifts of bread and wine may be brought to the altar simply from the credence table in the sanctuary.
- If hosts for the communion of the faithful are to be consecrated, they could be placed on a second corporal towards the side of the altar. This allows the priest to proffer the words of consecration directly over the host he will consume, with the other hosts on the altar but not directly in front of the priest as he speaks the Eucharistic prayer.
- The Sign of Peace should be given without physical contact, or may be omitted.
- During the Our Father, if the faithful choose to hold hands they should do so only with other members of their household.
- Ministers of Holy Communion are to use alcohol-based hand sanitizer before and after distributing Communion to the congregation (not in between communicants).
- Consider having a stand with a bowl of soapy water and a clean towel available in case physical contact is made. Pour water into ground after Mass.
- The practice of the faithful receiving the Precious Blood from the chalice is suspended.
- The practice of the faithful receiving Holy Communion on the tongue is suspended.
- Physical distancing is to be maintained in the Communion procession. Consider asking hospitality ministers to release each pew. Consider marking the floor with tape indicating 6 feet of distance between persons in the communion line. There should be a single line for communion.
- Singing is not permitted by anyone except the cantor.

After Mass

- Consider placing a stand near the presider's chair to hold the Roman Missal. This eliminates the need for the server to stand so close to the presider.
- Consider dismissing by pew toward different exits with doors propped open or held open by hospitality ministers.
- All hymnals and missalettes (and other items) should be removed from the pews and stored for the duration of the pandemic.
- Vessels should continue to be washed after each Mass in hot soapy water.
- High use areas within the church should be wiped down with disinfectant before and after each liturgy. Pews, chairs, ambos, hand rails, door handles, push plates, and knobs should be wiped down after each liturgy. Doors might be propped open to lessen contact, or hospitality ministers could hold doors open. Restroom facilities should be sanitized after each liturgy and regularly.
 - i. CENTER FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION (CDC):
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/reopen-guidance.html>
includes how to disinfect, where to disinfect.
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html> (Answers to frequently-asked questions)

III. Weddings, Funerals, Baptisms, and First Communion

- These liturgies are subject to all guidelines presented above. They are to take place at the pastor's discretion.
- Water for baptism is to be changed and blessed before each baptism. As always, blessed water should be properly disposed of in the ground.

IV. Initiation of Elect and Candidates

- These liturgies are subject to all guidelines presented above. This is to take place on a date that is at the pastor's discretion. It is highly recommended that initiation take place on a weekday Mass as to not greatly extend the Sunday liturgy. Otherwise, you may schedule an additional service on Sunday specifically for initiation.
- **Scrutiny dispensation:** The Third, Fourth and Fifth Sundays of Lent are the traditional times for the celebration of the Scrutinies with the Elect. The Scrutinies are an important part of the preparation for their initiation and, in ordinary circumstances, incorporate the whole community in prayer for their perseverance. Given the circumstances of this pandemic, the bishop has given a general dispensation from up to two of the Scrutinies (RCIA 34.3). Every effort should be made that each member of the Elect participates in at least one Scrutiny if this hasn't already taken place. These may be celebrated on a weekday when there are smaller congregations. Everyone is asked to do their best in these most unusual circumstances.

V. Confirmation

- This subject will be revisited after June 1st.