

OFFICE OF WORSHIP

MEMORANDUM

Date: May 26, 2020
To: All Parishes and Institutions of the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis
From: Reverend Tom Margevičius, Director, Office of Worship
Re: **Revised** Directives for Transitioning to **Phase II** of Liturgy during the Pandemic

I. Introduction

- A.** Saturday, May 23, 2020 Governor Tim Walz amended Executive Order 20-56 to allow larger gatherings of faith-based groups in Minnesota.
- B.** That same day Archbishop Hebda sent a letter to the entire Archdiocese indicating we may begin re-opening churches for public liturgy (**Phase II**) on Wednesday May 27, 2020, the date on which the following Directives take effect.
- C.** No parish is obligated to being public liturgies on May 27. They should do so only if the parish has adequate personnel and supplies to implement these Directives, and everyone is sufficiently trained and ready. They may need more time to prepare.
- D.** This document replaces that dated May 8, 2020.
- E.** The course of the pandemic is unpredictable, and these Directives may need to be adjusted as conditions change. Stay vigilant and informed of ongoing statements from the Archdiocese.
- F.** We apologize that parishes have not been given much advance notice to implement these Directives. Please share with the Office of Worship any best practices found useful.

II. General Principles

- A.** Our first consideration must continue to be for the spiritual and physical health of our parishioners and those whom they encounter, especially the most vulnerable: the elderly and those with chronic illnesses. We continue to rely on medical professionals and governmental standards to inform these directives.
- B.** The obligation to attend Sunday Mass and Holy Days of Obligation continues to be suspended as long as the pandemic continues.
- C.** All COVID-19 positive persons, those who are symptomatic, and those living with them, must stay home.
- D.** Persons over age 65 and those with preexisting health conditions should continue to stay home during Phase II and avoid public gatherings, including in church.
- E.** All the faithful should continue to follow hygienic practices at home: wash hands often, avoid touching the face, cover coughs and sneezes, etc.

- F. Every parish or institution must develop and implement a *COVID-19 Preparedness Plan* and designate and train a staff person to be the Plan Administrator. While there are many aspects of the Plan that fall outside these Directives on liturgy (staff safety procedures, work-at-home guidelines, etc.), the plan—including the name and contact information of the Plan Administrator—should be publicized to the entire parish online and in common gathering areas.
- G. Parishes should continue to broadcast or live-stream liturgies for the benefit of the homebound and those otherwise vulnerable and unable to attend in person.
- H. Priests should continue celebrating the Sacraments in seminaries and religious communities.
 - 1. If the priest already lives within the household, no other directives are necessary beyond those already in place within the community.
 - 2. If the priest does not live within the household, care must be taken to prevent his bringing infection into the community or contracting it from them. His interactions with them should observe these Directives.

III. Safety and Hygiene in Our Worship Spaces

- A. Weather permitting, prop doors open to minimize touch, and open windows to maximize air circulation.
- B. Designate certain doors “Entrance only” or “Exit only” to reduce social proximity. When possible position ushers at doors to promote social distancing as people enter.
- C. Provide hand sanitizer at all entrances and instructive signs such as how to [stop the spread of germs](#) and [protect oneself from sickness](#).
- D. High use areas should be wiped down with disinfectant before and after each liturgy, especially pews, chairs, ambos, handrails, doorknobs, and push plates.
- E. Restrooms should be sanitized after each liturgy and at other regular intervals.
- F. Hymnals, missalettes, and other commonly held items (e.g. children’s toys) should be removed and stored during the pandemic.
- G. The parish may print bulletins, but do not hand them out in person. The faithful may pick up copies on the way out of church. Better, provide them electronically.
- H. For worship aids, consider using digital projection screens. The parish might also email parishioners links to liturgy guides or the USCCB [Lectionary texts](#) to view on smartphones during Mass. As always, observe copyright laws and contact publishers about annual licenses.
- I. Baptismal fonts and holy water stoups should remain empty. Fresh water is to be used and blessed for each Baptism, and after each Baptism holy water should be disposed of in the sacrarium or poured into the ground.
- J. Altar vessels should continue to be washed after each Mass in hot soapy water.
- K. All liturgical vestments, including albs, are to be regularly cleaned.

- L. The liturgical environment should reflect the liturgical season but keep decorations at a minimum (less surfaces to clean or attract germs).
 - M. The COVID-19 Preparedness Plan Administrator must ensure that all aspects of the Plan are observed in the worship space: hand sanitizers and cleaning supplies are well-stocked, liturgical personnel are observing social distancing, staff and volunteers are trained for their responsibilities, etc.
- IV. Social Distancing within the Church**
- A. During Phase II, the maximum number of persons admitted into a church building is limited to 25% of the total seating capacity (as determined by the fire marshal), or 250 persons, whichever is less.
 - B. Each person must remain 6 feet away in all directions from others not in the same household. This also applies to chapels and other rooms on site. Depending on its layout, in some cases less than 25% of the church may be able to be occupied.
 - C. Tape or rope off two of every three pews (or even three of every four) and put tape or markers where people may/may not sit.
 - D. Find ways to limit the number of people can be admitted for each Mass such as reserving seats by phone or on-line registration.
 - E. Consider a temporary adjustment schedule to ensure sufficient time between services to sanitize. To accommodate smaller crowds and sufficient sanitization time you may need to add Masses on Saturday evenings, Sundays, or even during the week.
 - F. Ushers should coordinate with each other and count as people enter to guarantee too many do not enter. Should this happen, ushers should disallow further entry and encourage people to come to a later liturgy or participate virtually from the outside.
 - G. It may be possible to live stream Mass into a secondary overflow space, e.g. the school gym.
 - H. Face masks are strongly urged for all assembly members (but not for those under age two, [according to the CDC](#), since it may put them at risk of suffocation).
 - I. Cry Rooms should be closed and locked, since it is difficult to keep children there within social distance. Notify parishioners that these rooms are currently unavailable.
 - J. Have ushers limit the number of people in the restrooms at the same time. Place tape on the floor outside to indicate where people should keep 6 feet distant from each other while waiting in line.
 - K. Distributing Holy Communion requires special care. We must ensure reverence for the Blessed Sacrament yet retain social distance. After consulting theologians, the CDC, and the Minnesota Department of Health, we will observe the following:
 - 1. When the number of communicants is more than 10, Communion is distributed during Mass only to those few ministers in the sanctuary. The remaining faithful will be offered Communion after Mass following the protocols at **VII.** below.

2. When the number of communicants is less than 10, Communion may be distributed within Mass, maintaining proper social distancing.
 3. Reconsider the location and flow for the distribution of Holy Communion.
 4. Use markers on the floor or the ends of pews to demarcate six-foot intervals in the Communion Procession.
 5. The Precious Blood is not distributed to the faithful from the Chalice, except for those whose health does not permit receiving even a low-gluten host; in such a case a separate small Chalice may be used for that communicant only.
 6. The Communion distributor and the communicant should each apply hand sanitizer before and after Communion and wear face masks except when consuming the host.
 7. The faithful should receive Communion in the hand. The Communion distributor and the communicant should extend hands to keep as much distance as possible between them and keep hands still to avoid inadvertent touching.
 8. Those unable to receive Communion in the hand may discuss the matter with the pastor to seek an alternative (e.g. someone living in the same household could be delegated as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion).
 9. Wearing gloves to distribute Communion is not permitted, nor is using tongs or other instruments, plastic baggies, cups, pre-packaged containers, or any other unapproved vessels.
 10. The faithful may not wear gloves when receiving Communion in the hand, nor receive it in a paper tissue, plate, cup, or other disposable item.
- L.** Liturgies that would crowd church buildings should be adjusted to ensure smaller numbers. Do not have gatherings before or after and do not serve food or drink.
1. First Communions may be celebrated in the same manner as other Masses, observing social distancing. If the number of First Communicants is fewer than 10, they could be given Holy Communion within Mass.
 2. Confirmation ordinarily involves laying on hands and applying Chrism oil to the foreheads of the confirmandi. Separate protocols on Confirmation will be forthcoming from the Office of Worship.
 3. The rites of the *Order of Christian Burial* (vigil service, funeral Mass, Commendation) may be celebrated provided social distancing is observed. Parishes may suspend visitation if social distancing cannot be guaranteed.
 4. Weddings may be celebrated (including outdoors on church property during the pandemic), provided social distancing is observed; the bride and groom may be closer than 6 feet.
 5. Baptisms may be celebrated. See the March 18 for Directives how to celebrate them to avoid contact and spreading infection.
- M.** Gatherings on church grounds before or after Mass are not allowed during Phase II.

- N.** Priests are encouraged to celebrate Mass out-of-doors where, according to the MN Department of Public Health, the likelihood of passing infection is reduced and the need for sanitization are minimal.
1. Outdoor celebrations give an added sense of security especially to senior citizens who may judge it safer to remain within their vehicles.
 2. Where the location can accommodate vehicles, people may remain inside their vehicles. There is no limit to how many may participate from inside vehicles.
 3. There may not be more than 250 persons outside of vehicles at an outdoor Mass.
 4. Distribution of Communion at outdoor Masses follows **VII.** below.
- V. Guidelines for the First Time Back**
- A. Communication**
1. Communicate ahead of time with the entire parish. Notify them of any new Mass schedule, what social distancing protocols will be in place, space limitations and plans for online reservations, and ushers counting people at the doors.
 2. Parishioners should be encouraged to use the restroom at home before coming to church.
 3. Remind parishioners to wear masks and bring hand sanitizer.
- B. Choice of Mass**
1. The course of the Liturgical Year is to be maintained and the primacy of Sunday is to be respected, even for those unable to attend in person.
 2. If attending Sunday Mass impossible or inadvisable, the faithful may instead attend Mass on a weekday with smaller crowds. According to the Ordo it is often permissible, if desired, to use the Sunday liturgy texts on weekdays.
 3. When the liturgical day permits, priests should consider using the *Mass in the Time of Pandemic* with the Eucharistic Prayer for Various Needs and Occasions IV: Jesus Who Went about Doing Good.
- C. Liturgical Ministers**
1. Train greeters and ushers how to enact the new Directives, including how to deal gently with uncertainty during the first few weeks.
 2. Update other liturgical ministers, especially those involved in distributing Holy Communion.
 3. Unless they are absolutely necessary, do not use altar servers; those who serve must also be able to observe social distancing.
 4. Require all liturgical ministers to model good practices for the entire assembly.
- D. Music Ministry**
1. Congregational singing is temporarily discontinued, since singing expels more respiratory particles than speaking does. Instead, use cantors or instrumental music. Congregants are to respond to all spoken or chanted texts while wearing masks. Choirs are discontinued until it is safe to resume.

2. Cantors must keep at least 12 feet from each other, instrumentalists, and all others while singing. Except while singing, musicians should wear masks.
3. The musical keyboard, cantor stand, and instruments should be cleaned between Masses.

VI. Celebrating the Liturgy

A. Preparations Before Mass

1. Priests, deacons, and all liturgical ministers should wear face masks, use hand sanitizer, and observe hygienic practices before and after Mass.
2. Bread and wine should be placed on the credence table instead of a gifts table in the center of the congregation. Using larger hosts can reduce the likelihood of contact between minister and communicant.
3. The location of the Presider's Chair and other seats in the sanctuary must account for social distancing.
4. Liturgical ministers in the sanctuary need not wear face masks during Mass, provided they remain more than 6 feet apart, but should wear them when distributing Communion.

B. Parts of the Mass

1. Opening Announcement

- a. Make an announcement to set the tone for this different way of celebrating together. Clear procedures and expectations put people at ease.
- b. Remind them of adjustments: keep masks on, maintain social distance, no contact at the Sign of Peace, changes to Communion distribution, etc.

2. The Introductory Rites

- a. Processions through the assembly at the beginning and end of Mass should not occur, especially if the priest or other ministers are in a high-risk category.
- b. Place a book stand near the presider's chair for him to read and pray from *The Roman Missal* or place it upon the altar.

3. The Liturgy of the Word

- a. Clarify where the reader(s) sit, how to approach the ambo, etc.
- b. Minimize page turns with carefully arranged ribbons.

4. The Liturgy of the Eucharist

- a. Do not "pass the plate" for the collection; use (and regularly clean) long-handled baskets or invite the faithful to drop their offerings into a large container on the way in/out of church. Encourage online donations.
- b. Bring the bread and wine to the altar from the credence table.
- c. Place ciboria with hosts for the assembly on a corporal distant from the presider to minimize his breathing on them.

- d. Since there are no altar servers, the priest will wash his own hands, after which he should also apply hand sanitizer.
- e. Do not hold hands during the Lord's Prayer nor offer the Sign of Peace using any physical contact.

5. Distribution of Holy Communion

- a. Priests may receive by intinction, or each may drink from a separate Chalice. Once someone drinks from a Chalice, no one else may receive from that Chalice. Priests and deacons should purify their own vessels, after which they should apply hand sanitizer.
- b. Priests should apply hand sanitizer before distributing Communion to those in the sanctuary, who likewise should apply sanitizer before receiving.
- c. Those over age 65 (including priests and deacons) or otherwise at risk should not distribute Communion; use Extraordinary Ministers instead.
- d. After Communion, all ciboria with consecrated hosts are reposed in the tabernacle, and ministers should apply hand sanitizer.

6. Concluding Rites

- a. The Presider may offer an optional blessing over the people according to the liturgical occasion; the *Mass in Time of Pandemic* has its own proper blessing.
- b. A concluding hymn is not required in the Order of Mass; consider omitting it. Instead of heading for the exits as a group, the faithful may leave at their own pace, before or after distribution of Communion outside of Mass.
- c. After the Blessing and Dismissal, the priest and ministers go directly to the sacristy. If distribution of Communion after Mass follows, priests and deacons remove their chasubles and dalmatics.
- d. After Mass, once all Communion vessels have been sacramentally purified, they (along with other items handled in the Mass) should be washed in hot soapy water after each service.

VII. Distributing Holy Communion at the Conclusion of Mass

- A. If distribution of Holy Communion immediately follows Mass, it may be helpful to play meditative instrumental music to maintain a prayerful atmosphere.
- B. For each Communion station place a small table with a corporal and a dispenser of hand sanitizer on it.
- C. If there are not enough ordinary ministers, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion may assist, provided they are adequately trained in both liturgical and hygienic protocols.
- D. Having removed chasubles and dalmatics, priests and deacons take ciboria from the tabernacle and bring them to the Communion stations.

- E.** Each minister places the ciborium on the corporal atop the Communion station table, genuflects, puts on a face mask, applies hand sanitizer, and picks up the ciborium for distribution. Neither ministers nor communicants should wear gloves.
- F.** The faithful apply hand sanitizer in the Communion line before approaching the Communion station, keeping 6 feet from all others (including those in adjacent lines); observe the floor markers.
- G.** Once the person ahead has received, the next communicant approaches. The minister holds up the host and (through the face mask) says, “The Body of Christ.” The communicant, wearing a face mask, replies, “Amen.” The communicant removes the face mask and extends both hands far in front of the body, hands held flat with palms upward, the left hand on top and the right beneath it (left-handed persons may reverse hands). The minister carefully places the host on the hand. The communicant picks up the host, consumes it, and replaces the mask. The communicant then steps aside and applies sanitizer before interacting with others.
- H.** If while distributing Communion a minister touches a communicant, immediately after distributing to that communicant the minister puts the ciborium on the table and re-sanitizes hands before distributing to the next communicant.
- I.** After receiving, communicants may depart immediately, or pray a few minutes in church in gratitude for the Eucharist, then depart at leisure.
- J.** The Pastor may allow the following *alternative method* of distributing Communion if he judges it safe for his faithful. In this method the minister must carry hand sanitizer and be ready to use it in case of inadvertent touch, and must take greater care to maintain the 6-foot social distance requirement.
 - a.** Communicants remain in their pews after Mass, where ministers will bring Communion to them.
 - b.** Ministers, wearing masks, walk through unoccupied pews and distribute to those in the pew behind. Recipients who wish to receive should stand; those who do not should be seated.
 - c.** The procedure at **G.** above is followed.
 - d.** Ministers should start from the back of the church and work their way forward. After the minister departs for the next pew, those who have just received Communion may depart.
- K.** Ministers return all remaining hosts to the tabernacle and secure them.
- L.** Ministers should immediately wash their hands thoroughly in soap and hot water.
- M.** If Holy Communion is distributed in a liturgy independent of Mass, use the full rite in *Holy Communion Outside of Mass*, incorporating these adaptations.

CDC's Interim Guidance for Communities of Faith: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/faith-based.html>

MN Dept. of Health's Guidance for Reopening Houses of Worship:
https://mn.gov/deed/assets/worship-guidance-ACC_tcm1045-433301.pdf

This document concludes with an extensive series of links to numerous other helpful resources.