



# PROTOCOLS FOR RETURNING TO CHURCH FOR THE PUBLIC CELEBRATION OF THE EUCHARIST

Updated 5 July 2020

The following protocol is established for St. Joseph Parish, Manchester, as the approved guidelines for the community upon the return to scheduled public Masses in the parish Church. Please note that, for the safety of all concerned, there will be no deviation from this roster and all who enter the Church will be expected to abide by these protocols.

Each item in this directive has been established by taking into account federal, state, and local government mandates and suggestions, along with recommendations by the CDC and other health officials, and by recommendations and mandates from the Archdiocese of St. Louis.

## GENERAL

1. The celebrations of First Communions that have been postponed because of the pandemic may be scheduled according to the judgment of the pastor at a convenient regularly scheduled Mass.
2. The distribution of Holy Communion outside of Mass is left to the judgment of the pastor. If allowed, the requirements for the distribution of Communion during Mass are to be observed (such as, but not limited to, the use of masks and the sanitation of hands before and after Holy Communion is distributed. See more detailed information below.)
3. The Adoration chapel will remain open as long as the requirements of social distancing and sanitation of the facilities can be observed. Common prayer materials will not be made available. They are stored until the pandemic is over. Individuals may bring their own prayer materials with them into the chapel.
4. In-person parish meetings may take place at the discretion of the pastor, as long as both the six-foot distancing requirement and the use of masks and gloves or frequent handwashing can be observed. Tele- or video-conferencing are always an option.

## BEFORE MASS

1. All the faithful are dispensed from the obligation of the Easter Duty and the obligation to attend Mass on Sunday until further notice. Therefore,
  - a. 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.
  - b. Those who are at risk because of an underlying health issue or who are over 60 are strongly encouraged, for their own health, to avoid the risk of attending public celebrations of the Mass.
  - c. Daily and Sunday Masses will be available on the parish website so 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 will be done before and after each service.
  - a. The pews utilized by the assembly will be wiped down with disinfectant.
  - b. All hymnals and missalettes are removed from the pews and stored for the duration of the pandemic. No song sheets or other worship aids will be distributed. No other materials may be left in the pews. The faithful are encouraged to bring their own missals or hymnals for use during the celebration of Mass.
  - c. Restroom facilities are reserved for emergency use only. Please use the restroom at home before arriving at the church.
  - d. Restroom facilities, entrance/exit door handles, push plates, and knobs will be sanitized after each service.
  - e. Water fountains used to dispense drinking water are unavailable until further notice.
3. Holy water fonts will remain empty until further notice.
4. Hand sanitizer will be made available throughout the church, whenever possible.
5. The faithful are obliged to wear a mask (or other face covering) upon entering the church and during the celebration of Mass, except 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. The Pastor will see to it that these obligations are enforced without exception.
6. Clergy and other ministers will maintain six-foot distancing and will not greet parishioners as they enter or exit the church.
7. There are no choirs or bands, only a musician and cantor.

## **DURING MASS**

1. Entry and exit doors will be adequately designated and monitored. Entry doors will be propped or held open before Mass, and exit doors will 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 will assist with directing people to pews specifically marked. Attendees will be counted as they enter and attendance may be limited to assure compliance with social distancing requirements.
3. Families are to maintain six-foot distancing between their family and other families or individuals throughout the celebration of Mass. (See attached seating chart.)
  - a. Seating is arranged such that six feet of distance is maintained between members of one household and members of another.
  - b. One or two pews are left vacant in between congregants such that six feet of distance can be maintained in all directions.
4. Offertory processions are suspended as well as the sign of peace. Collection baskets (or any other materials) will not be passed from one family to another, nor will ushers take up the collection from the congregation. Stationary baskets will be used for donations from the assembly and will be monitored by the ushers until the donations are collected and handled according to the proper protocols in place for handling the collection.

## **PROCEDURE FOR RECEPTION OF HOLY COMMUNION**

PLEASE NOTE: Communion distribution will take place *after* the final blessing. There will be two communion lines – one by the piano the other by the baptistery. Only the priest and deacon will distribute. After communion is received, the communicant (and family) departs the church under the direction of the ushers. No one will go back to their pew.

1. All concelebrating priests and deacons will receive Holy Communion by intinction utilizing a separate chalice from the main celebrant and with the last clergy communicant consuming all that remains in the Chalice.

2. Ushers or other volunteers who are masked and gloved will ensure six-foot distancing in the communion line. Floor markings will be placed six feet apart in the aisles in which the congregation approaches the sanctuary for communion to facilitate proper social distancing.

7. Communion ministers will be behind Plexiglas standards and will sanitize their hands immediately before and after distributing Communion, and when at all possible, will 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.

8. Distribution of Holy Communion from the chalice is prohibited to the assembly. For those who are gluten intolerant, special arrangements are to be made with the sacristan.

9. For the distribution of Holy Communion, a single-file for each Communion minister is necessary to maintain social distancing. When leaving the pew to receive Communion, take all belongings with you as you will leave the church immediately after reception. Follow the directions of the ushers as you leave your pew.

10. During this time, Holy Communion will only 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.

11. When approaching the Communion minister, the communicant is to pull their mask below their chin, present one hand resting on the palm of the other and reach under the Plexiglas shield. After responding "Amen," the communicant reverently places the Eucharist in his or her mouth and immediately replaces their mask.

## **AFTER MASS**

1. Ushers will not hand out bulletins or other materials. Bulletins will be on tables near the exit.
2. Clergy and other ministers will not to greet parishioners as they exit the church.
3. There will be no receptions or social gatherings (e.g., coffee and doughnuts) following Mass.
4. Pews and other high traffic areas of the church will be wiped down before the next service, with the removal of trash and other items from the pews.

We are very appreciative of your understanding and support during this time. We understand, too, these directives may seem stringent but all are made in the best interest and the safety of not only the clergy and staff but also of each parishioner and guest who worships with us. There are other protocols in the planning and as soon as they are ready to be implemented will be distributed by both a video and a written explanation.

This is a rough draft and not necessarily to scale but will still give you an idea of how the seating is established to give us the maximum amount of attendees and remain within the 6' distancing.

### SEATING CHART CODE

GREEN - 1 person (singles)

YELLOW - 2 people (couples/doubles)

PINK - families (variable numbers)

BLUE - overflow (singles and doubles)

(Chart is a representative of seating availability.  
Actual location and numbers per row may vary.)

