



ARCHDIOCESE OF DENVER

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Further Guidance for Public Mass | Effective 2 June 2020

The following guidance is presented as an update to the 9 May 2020 document. It is not intended to be comprehensive. The expectation is that pastors will make prudent decisions for their parishes after reading through the Archdiocesan guidance and understanding state and local regulations.

It is expected that all parishes and missions are now offering weekend and weekday Masses, as well as providing access to all other sacraments. Parishes are encouraged to offer some Masses that observe more stringent precautions that are reserved for those 65 and older.

1. Considerations for those participating in Mass:

- **Limited Numbers:** Due to the restrictions being observed, the number of people able to attend each Mass remains reduced.
- **No Sunday or Holy Day Obligation:** The faithful have been dispensed from their Sunday and Holy Day obligation to participate in the Mass until further notice. Keeping the Sabbath holy should include an intentional time in prayer including engagement in the readings for the day, which may be enhanced through watching a pre-recorded or live stream Mass and making spiritual communion.
- **Discern the Risk:** Even with best practices, the risk of infection exists anytime a person leaves their home. The faithful should take under consideration their age, health, who they are bringing, etc. It is still recommended that those 65 or older and those who have severe underlying medical conditions remain at home, unless your parish has a Mass or two set aside for those who are 65 and older.
- **Germ Mitigation:** Those who attend public Masses should continue to: wear a mask, refrain from unnecessarily touching any surfaces, respect social distancing (remaining at least 6-feet away from others), use hand sanitizer when it is available, follow the directions for seating in the church, gym, or outdoors, and stay home if they are sick or symptomatic. Safeguarding the health and welfare of others, not just oneself, is the moral duty of Christians.
- **Prepare Children:** For those who may attend Mass with children, make sure that children 3 and older have a mask and understand the need to wear it, and explain social distancing to them.
- **Schedule:** The faithful must check with their parish as to when Masses are offered each day and the process for attending a Mass. The important thing is to attend Mass and receive the Eucharist when available, regardless of the day.

2. Considerations for parishes:

- **Social Distancing:** Indoor and outdoor capacity for services is determined by the number of people who can be safely distanced from each other in any space. That said, until further notice, indoor spaces should not exceed 25% of their fire code occupancy. A minimum of 6-feet of separation, in all directions, should be observed between individuals, however families who live together may sit together without physical distancing. Taping 6-foot marks on the floor of the space leading up to where communion is distributed is helpful. How people return from receiving Communion cannot be down the same aisle as those coming forward. Other systems for distributing the Eucharist may be devised, e.g., the ministers going to the people rather than the people coming forward, etc.
- **Flow of people:** No matter the occupancy, advanced preparation should take place and instructions should be given so that pinch points do not infringe upon physical distancing. Pews need to be marked off designating where people can sit and where families can sit, since more distance is needed for a

family seated together. A structured dismissal by section is to be followed so that crowding does not occur.

- **Dispensation from Place:** Pastors may choose to use spaces other than the principal church for the celebration of Mass or distribution of the Eucharist. This may include parking lots, outdoor spaces, gymnasiums, halls, etc.
- **Determining who attends:** According to the size of the congregation and the spaces utilized, a consistent and fair method for selecting and communicating who can participate in each Mass should be developed. Parishes should consider having one person who understands the tool/method being used, to oversee the process of setting the list for those who attend each Mass.
- **Ushers:** A knowledgeable, welcoming, and calm person is very helpful in encouraging mask wearing, observance of social distancing, answering questions, receiving donations, etc.
- **Offertory:** A centralized basket should be visible and pointed out during the Mass so that the faithful can make a donation in person if they desire. Online giving options should also be mentioned.
- **Communication:** Parishes should deploy all means possible to communicate the process for participating in limited public Mass. Efforts should be made to collect contact information of the faithful, then adding it to databases and communication channels.
- **Ministers:** Limited, but adequate clergy and other ministers should occupy the sanctuary, observing social distancing.
- **Before and After Mass:** While people are able to arrive early and stay after Mass to pray, everyone should be made aware of when the prior/following Mass ends/begins. Furthermore, the faithful need to know the order for leaving the church/space so that no congestion occurs. No social gatherings are to be held before or after Mass.
- **Germ Mitigation:** Ensure proper cleaning of frequently touched surfaces in the church and between Masses, remove Holy Water from the fonts and, when possible, provide hand sanitizer. Priests and readers should not wear masks during the Mass. The faithful who have attended Mass should be encouraged to help with sanitizing of the church for the next group.
- **Hymnals and Missals:** Because of the difficulty in sanitizing missalettes and hymnals they are to be removed from the pews. Disposable/single use aids can be produced if needed.

3. Liturgical Considerations:

- Suspend the exchange of the Sign of Peace and handholding.
- Suspend the distribution of the Precious Blood.
- It is not necessary that the priest be the one who distributes the Eucharist, especially if he is 65 or older; deacons or extraordinary ministers can help.
- Hand sanitizer should be used by the minister before and after the distribution of Holy Communion.
- The host should be placed in the hand in a manner so as to avoid any skin-to-skin touching. Should this occur, hand sanitizer should be used before resuming distribution.
- The priest, prior to Mass or at the beginning of Mass, should reiterate to the faithful coming forward to receive the Eucharist to maintain 6-feet of distance as they approach the minister. He should instruct the faithful how to receive Communion in the hand in a reverent manner and to self-communicate. While wearing a mask, the faithful should establish a clear open palm pad for the minister to place the host on. Stepping to the side, they should take the host with their opposite hand, pull the mask down, consume the Eucharist, and then replace their mask.
- Avoid the use of a choir, instead use a cantor or one or two persons singing. It has been demonstrated that singing can increase the spread of the virus, thus congregational singing is not encouraged during this time.