

OFFICE OF WORSHIP

MEMORANDUM

Date: May 8, 2020
To: All Parishes and Institutions of the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis
From: Reverend Tom Margevičius, Director, Office of Worship
Re: Directives for Transitioning to **Phase II** of Liturgy during the Pandemic

I. Introduction

For many weeks the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis has been in **Phase I** of liturgy during the pandemic (no public gatherings, fewer than 10 persons, etc.). Monday May 18, 2020 we are planning to transition to **Phase II** (limited re-opening of churches for public liturgy) when the following directives take effect. The course of the pandemic remains unpredictable, and not only is it too soon to know when **Phase III** will begin, but also these current directives may need to be adjusted as conditions change. Please stay vigilant and informed of ongoing statements from the Archdiocese.

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.** 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.
- F.** 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. If social distancing restrictions make attending Sunday Mass impossible or inadvisable, the faithful may consider instead attending Mass on a weekday with smaller crowds, and it is usually permissible (according to the Ordo) to use the Sunday liturgy texts on weekdays.
- G.** 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 for all 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. He should interact with them by carefully observing the directives below.
- H.** All the faithful should continue to follow hygienic practices at home: wash hands often, avoid touching the face, cover coughs and sneezes, etc. It is also recommended to use the restroom at home before coming to church.

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.** Consider designating certain doors “Entrance only” or “Exit only” to reduce social proximity. Station ushers at doors to promote social distancing as people enter.
- C.** Provide instructive signs and hand sanitizer at all entrances.
- D.** High use areas in the church should be wiped down with disinfectant before and after each liturgy, especially pews, chairs, ambos, handrails, doorknobs, and push plates.
- E.** Restroom facilities 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.** You may print bulletins, but do not have anyone hand them out. The faithful may pick up their own copies on the way out of church. Better, provide them electronically.
- H.** For worship aids, consider using digital projection screens. You might also email parishioners links to your parish liturgy guides or the USCCB [Lectionary texts](#) to view on their own smartphones during Mass. As always, observe copyright laws and contact publishers about annual licenses.
- I.** Baptismal fonts and holy water stoups should remain empty.
- J.** 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.
- K.** Altar vessels should continue to be washed after each Mass in hot soapy water.
- L.** All liturgical vestments, including albs, are to be regularly cleaned.
- M.** The liturgical environment should reflect the liturgical season but keep decorations at a minimum (less surfaces to clean or attract germs).
- N.** Make a plan: keep hand sanitizers and cleaning supplies in stock; train staff and volunteers for their new responsibilities; ensure technology is ready. If your maintenance staff does not have a written emergency plan, make one now.

IV. Social Distancing within the Church

- A.** During Phase II, the maximum number of persons admitted into a church building is limited to 30% of the total seating capacity.
- 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 30% of the church may be able to be occupied.
- C.** Tape or rope off every other, or two of every three, pews and put tape or markers where people may/may not sit.
- D.** Consider admitting a limited number of people for each Mass by means such as on-line registration or reserving seats.
- E.** Consider a temporary adjustment in the Mass schedule to ensure social distancing. Perhaps add a Mass 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.** Consider live streaming Mass into a secondary 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** is a delicate topic. We must ensure reverence for the Blessed Sacrament yet retain social distance. After consulting theologians and medical professionals, we have decided that distribution of Communion after Mass would pose less health risk because it allows for greater social distancing.
 - 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, always maintaining proper social distancing.
 - 3.** The faithful are recommended to receive Communion in the hand.
 - 4.** Wearing gloves to distribute Communion is unbecoming of the Blessed Sacrament and is not to be done, nor is using tongs or other instruments; in any case these are just as likely as hands to transmit infections. Nor may the faithful wear gloves when receiving Communion in the hand, nor receive it in a paper tissue, plate, cup, or other disposable item.
 - 5.** Communion hosts may not be distributed in zip-lock baggies, plastic cups, pre-packaged containers, or any other unapproved vessels.

- L.** Liturgies that would crowd church buildings such as First Communion and Confirmation should be adjusted or multiplied to ensure smaller crowds.
 - 1. First Communion Masses could be conducted as are all other Masses, observing social distancing. If the number of First Communicants is fewer than 10, they could be given Holy Communion within Mass; if more than 10, wait until after Mass to distribute Communion to them.
 - 2. Confirmation is complicated since it 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.
 - M.** Gatherings on church grounds before or after Mass are not allowed during Phase II.
 - N.** Priests are welcome to continue celebrating Mass out-of-doors, with the faithful either remaining in their vehicles, or even outside of their vehicles provided they remain 6 feet from those not in their household. In such cases distribution of Holy Communion follows the procedures at **VII.** below.
- V. Guidelines for the First Sunday 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. Encourage parishioners to wear masks and bring hand sanitizer.
 - B. Liturgical Ministers**
 - 1. When the liturgical day permits, priests should continue using the *Mass in the Time of Pandemic* with the Eucharistic Prayer for Various Needs and Occasions IV: Jesus Who Went about Doing Good.
 - 2. Train greeters and ushers regarding new directives, including how to deal gently with uncertainty during the first few weeks.
 - 3. Update other liturgical ministers, especially any who will be involved in the distribution of Holy Communion.
 - 4. Do not use altar servers.
 - 5. Require all liturgical ministers to model good practices for the entire assembly.
 - C. Music Ministry**
 - 1. Congregational singing is to be temporarily discontinued, since singing expels many more respiratory particles than speaking does. Instead, use soloists or instrumental music. Choirs are discontinued until it is safe to resume.
 - 2. Music ministry might involve only one or two cantors and an instrumentalist.
 - 3. Musicians must also adhere to social distancing between them.
 - 4. Clean the musical keyboard, cantor stand, and instruments 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 other good hygienic practices before and after Mass.
2. Bread and wine should be kept from public areas (brought to the altar from the credence table). Using larger hosts can reduce the likelihood of contact between minister and communicant.
3. If they will be distributing Communion after Mass (cf. **VII.** below) priests and deacons may omit the chasuble and dalmatic (which are harder to launder should they be exposed to infection) and celebrate Mass simply in alb and stole.
4. The location of the Presider's Chair and other seats in the sanctuary must account for social distancing.
5. 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 outside of Mass.

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: no Sign of Peace, keeping distance, changes to the distribution of Holy Communion, etc.

2. The Introductory Rites

- a. Processions through the assembly at the beginning and end of Mass need 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. Bring the bread and wine to the altar from the credence table.
- b. Consecrate enough hosts for all the faithful but either use covered ciboria or place them on a corporal distant from the presider to minimize his breathing on them.

- c. 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.
- d. Since there are no altar servers, the priest will wash his own hands.
- e. Do not offer the Sign of Peace using any physical contact and do not hold hands during the Lord’s Prayer.

5. Distribution of Holy Communion

- a. Reconsider the location and flow for the distribution of Holy Communion.
- b. Use markers on the floor or the ends of pews to demarcate six-foot intervals in the Communion Procession.
- c. Those over age 65 (including priests and deacons) or otherwise at risk should not distribute Communion; use Extraordinary Ministers instead.
- d. Each minister should apply hand sanitizer before distributing Communion.
- e. Only one priest or deacon may drink from a Chalice; any other clergy may receive by intinction or use a separate Chalice. Distribution of the Precious Blood to the faithful will continue to be suspended.
- f. After Communion, all ciboria with consecrated hosts are reposed in the tabernacle.

6. Concluding Rite

- 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. Consider the best way to dismiss the assembly to respect social distancing. Perhaps ushers could dismiss them row by row, as might be done after a wedding.

VII. Distributing Holy Communion outside of Mass

- A. If distribution of Holy Communion follows immediately after Mass, use the following protocol. If Holy Communion is distributed in a liturgy independent of Mass, use the full rite in *Holy Communion Outside of Mass*, incorporating these adaptations.
- B. It may be helpful to play meditative instrumental music to maintain a prayerful atmosphere.
- C. For each Communion station place a small table covered with a corporal and have a dispenser of hand sanitizer ready.

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- D.** If they were wearing them, priests and deacons remove chasubles and dalmatics, take a ciborium from the tabernacle, and bring it to the Communion station table.
- E.** Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion may assist if there are not enough ordinary ministers.
- F.** Each minister places the ciborium on the corporal atop the Communion station table, genuflects, puts on a face mask, and applies hand sanitizer. He then picks up the ciborium for distribution. Neither ministers nor communicants should wear gloves. The faithful may apply hand sanitizer before getting in the Communion line.
- G.** The faithful approach at each Communion station, keeping 6 feet from all others (including those in adjacent lines); observe the floor markers.
- H.** The minister holds up the host and (through the face mask) says, “The Body of Christ.” The communicant replies, “Amen,” and removes the face mask (if wearing one) and receives Communion.
- I.** If a minister has touched the hand or mouth of a communicant, immediately after distributing to that communicant, the minister puts the ciborium on the table and re-sanitizes his hands before distributing to the next communicant.
- J.** After receiving, communicants may depart immediately, or pray a few minutes in their seats in gratitude for the Eucharist, then depart at leisure.
- K.** The Pastor may use the following alternative method of distributing Communion if he judges it workable and safer for his faithful.
 - a.** Communicants remain in their pews after Mass, where ministers (wearing masks) will bring Communion to them.
 - b.** Ministers, wearing masks, walk through unoccupied pews and distribute to those in the pew behind. Recipients may receive either kneeling (which is a shorter reach for the distributor) or standing.
 - c.** Ministers should start from the back of the church and work their way forward. After the minister departs for the next pew, an usher may dismiss the pew of those who have just received Communion.
- L.** Ministers return all remaining hosts to the tabernacle and secure them.
- M.** Ministers should immediately wash their hands thoroughly in soap and hot water.