



## THE DIOCESE OF HOUMA-THIBODAUX

### GUIDELINES FOR THE LAY FAITHFUL DURING THE CELEBRATION OF MASS IN A CHURCH WITH SOCIAL DISTANCING EFFECTIVE MAY 16, 2020



**WEAR A MASK**



**SOCIAL DISTANCING**



**NO PHYSICAL CONTACT**

#### DO I HAVE TO GO TO MASS?

- Until further notice, all Catholics in the Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux remain dispensed from their obligation to attend Sunday Mass.
- Therefore, you do not have to attend Mass if you are unable or feel unsafe in doing so. You may observe the Lord's Day by praying together as a family, by watching a Mass via livestream, or by doing some other act of devotion.

#### WHAT SHOULD I EXPECT?

- Mass will feel a bit different for the time being. It will likely not be the triumphant return that many of us are imagining. Safety precautions required are not ideal; however, your health and safety remain a priority. In order to resume the public celebration of Mass, there are procedures that must be in place.

#### HOW MANY PEOPLE?

- Mass size will be limited to no more than 25% of Diocesan calculated maximum capacity.
- Limiting the number of people at each Mass is difficult. We thank you for your patience and understanding.

#### WHAT CAN I DO BEFOREHAND?

- Mass attendance will be limited, either through an RSVP system or on a first come, first served basis. Please consult your parish website or social media communication for more information.
- If your parish is using an RSVP system, you can assure your spot at Mass by signing up via the RSVP system of your parish. This can generally be done either through a phone call to your parish office or through the online system your parish has set up. Again, consult your parish website or social media communication for more information.
- If your parish is using a first come, first served system, it is recommended that you arrive as early as 30 minutes before Mass time, but not earlier. If you arrive earlier, you should remain in your vehicle until you can enter the church.
- None of us want to turn away someone from attending Mass; however, the restrictions are for the health and safety of you, your family, those others attending, and those serving you at Mass. Please be understanding if you are not able to attend Mass.
- If any of the lay faithful are high-risk, or present any symptoms of illness, they are asked to NOT come to Mass. Out of respect for others we ask that they participate from home during the illness.

#### ARE THERE ANY REQUIREMENTS I SHOULD KNOW ABOUT?

- The lay faithful who attend a Mass must bring their own cloth mask, which must be worn at all times. No one will be allowed to stay for Mass without a mask. They must be taken off so that you might receive Holy Communion, but otherwise they must be worn for the entire time that you are at Mass.

## **WHAT ABOUT WHEN I GET TO CHURCH?**

- Members of the same households may sit together, but there must be a six-foot distance between households at all times.
- Ushers will ensure that this distance is respected.

## **WHAT SHOULD I EXPECT?**

- At all times, a six-foot social distance will have to be maintained between households. To help with this, your parish may rope off certain pews or designate pews for people to sit.
- Multiple households can sit in a pew as long as the six-foot distance is maintained.
- Masks are to be worn at all times. They must be taken off so that you might receive Holy Communion, but otherwise they must be worn for the entire time that you are on church grounds.
- Hand sanitizer should be available and used regularly.
- Follow the instructions of your parish in terms of physical contact and distribution of Holy Communion. You are asked to receive Communion on your hand, holding it out flatly such that the priest can distribute without any physical contact.
- Parents with small children should remember that cry rooms will not meet the social distancing criteria.
- Music will be limited to one instrumentalist and one cantor. Choirs will not be allowed. There are to be no altar servers.
- It is preferred that a priest or deacon proclaim all the Scripture readings. However, if a lay lector is utilized, only one is permitted.
- There is to be no offertory procession. There is to be a designated basket, away from the sanctuary, in which the lay faithful may place their financial offerings as they arrive to or depart from Mass.
- The Sign of Peace must be given without physical contact.
- We respectfully ask that there be no congregating after Mass. The lay faithful are respectfully asked to depart immediately after Mass is concluded.

## **REGARDING THE DISTRIBUTION OF HOLY COMMUNION**

- As the lay faithful process to receive Holy Communion, a six-foot distance must be maintained. Ushers will assist in coordinating said distance.
- The communicant approaches, removing their mask.
- If the communicant is wearing gloves, they must remove their gloves before receiving Holy Communion.
- Considering the health risks associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, the risks associated with its transmission, and health of those distributing Holy Communion, the lay faithful are strongly urged to receive Holy Communion in the hand.
- The priest, deacon, or lay extraordinary minister, holding one edge of the consecrated host, places the outer edge of the consecrated host in the communicant's outstretched hand. The minister then reverently releases the consecrated host, allowing the remainder of the consecrated host to reverently fall into the communicant's outstretched hand without the hand of the minister making contact with the communicant's outstretched hand.
- Should any physical contact occur during the distribution of Holy Communion, the priest, deacon, or lay extraordinary minister must stop and sanitize their hands immediately.

## **HOW CAN I HELP MY PARISH?**

- First and foremost, pray for your parish and pray for your priests! These are extraordinary circumstances and difficult guidelines to enforce. No one enjoys having to do this. Your prayers and your patience are greatly appreciated.
- Offer to assist! Ushers and hospitality ministers will be more important than ever and will have to be present at each Mass. Offer to volunteer your time or any particular gifts you have to assist your parish in these new endeavors.
- Follow the guidelines as they have been explained here. Take proper hygiene measures and adhere to any system which your parish may institute.
- Continue to offer your financial support to your parishes. Only together can we continue to move forward! We are grateful for your generosity.