



DIOCESE OF RAPID CITY

Memorandum

TO: Diocese of Rapid City
FROM: Most Rev. Peter M. Muhich, Bishop of Rapid City
DATE: September 22, 2020
SUBJECT: Guidelines for Celebration of Mass during the coronavirus pandemic

General comments

1. The following guidelines replace those issued on May 1, 2020 and June 4, 2020.
2. We must be serious about the real threat of this virus. It is important to understand that parishes in certain locations within the diocese have experienced varying degrees of the COVID-19 disease. Ordinances placed on various communities by local government also impact how we celebrate Mass.
3. Pastors are asked to follow the guidelines offered by the CDC as well as State and local authorities.
4. Each priest should monitor his own health diligently and arrange for an immediate COVID screening if he should experience a fever or other typical symptoms of the virus.
5. Keep in mind that a change in the status of the spread of this virus could result in a return to increased restrictions on Mass attendance.

Guidelines

1. The obligation to celebrate Mass remains suspended for all persons. No one is obligated to attend Mass. Persons who are concerned about the present situation, especially those who are at high risk for contracting COVID-19 and those who are at greater risk of exposure to the disease because of their employment, are encouraged to remain sheltered and safe.
2. Pastors are encouraged to continue livestreaming or taping Masses for their parishioners to enable those who are choosing not to attend Mass in person to stay connected to the local community. If this service is suspended, it would be helpful to inform parishioners celebrating remotely of the availability of online or televised Mass programs offered elsewhere, including the diocesan TV Mass.
3. Pastors with multiple parishes will determine how to apportion Masses for each of the parish communities they serve.
4. These are the suggested guidelines for celebrating a public Mass:
 - a. Use every other pew.
 - b. Each family unit or individual is asked to sit six feet apart from the persons in the same pew.
 - c. Parishioners are encouraged to wear masks.
 - d. Pastors will inform parishioners that if they are sick or are living with someone who is sick on the day they intend or a scheduled to attend a limited public Mass, they should remain home.

- e. Parishioners should be encouraged to remain 6 feet apart as they enter and exit the parish church.
- f. Parishioners are asked to wash their hands before leaving home. If available, hand sanitizer may be provided at the door of the place where Mass is celebrated for those who want to use it.
- g. Pastors need to determine how many liturgical ministers to use and where to position them in the sanctuary.
- h. Choral singing is discouraged due to an understanding of the increased risk of spreading infection due to the increased expiration distance of droplets when singing.
- i. A collection basket may be placed at the entrance to collect offerings as parishioners arrive or depart instead of passing baskets during Mass.
- j. In preparing the altar during Mass, a sufficient quantity of hosts for the faithful should be placed in a ciborium or paten on a separate corporal on the right side of the altar to allow the priest to consecrate the main host as well as those for the faithful without breathing on the hosts for the faithful.
- k. The Sign of Peace will be offered only verbally.
- l. For the distribution of Communion:
 - Communion is given only under the form of bread.
 - Parishioners will be encouraged to form a single line, maintaining six-foot distance between each individual or family group.
 - Those who wish to receive Holy Communion on the tongue should be asked to wait until others have received before coming forward.
 - Each priest, deacon or extraordinary minister of Holy Communion is encouraged to wear a mask while giving Communion to the faithful.
 - Those distributing Communion should have sanitizer present on a nearby table for use as needed.
 - Pastors may also choose to have sanitizer present for the parishioners near the Communion station for communicants who want to use it.
- m. If a priest is concerned about his own health, he may have a deacon or an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion distribute Communion.
- n. Parishioners are encouraged to avoid socializing closer than six feet from one another after Mass.
- o. Pastors are encouraged to have the pews and other areas of the church building sanitized following each Mass or sacramental celebration.
- p. Parishioners are encouraged to wash their hands when they arrive at home.
- q. If Mass is celebrated outside, these guidelines should be adapted according to the space available.