

Family of St. Mark,

We are now in “Phase Two” and I have had some requests for more guidelines. I think I just have a few directions to give.

1. It seems that while the “allowable occupancy level” was raised from 25% to 50% but the social distancing space is still 6 feet, this new directive will not probably not change your number of spaces since most of our Churches were maxed out already with the 25% rate at 6 feet distancing. **I expect that our Churches will maintain the 6-foot spacing between individual or family household groups in the Church.** You might increase numbers per space if you have more families taking up one or two of the spaces in a pew with more than just two people. **Those attending Mass are expected to wear masks and should be instructed to do so.**
2. **You may begin some meetings if you can ensure that social distancing will be respected, and masks are worn especially when meeting indoors and occupancy numbers are enforced.** I discourage meals as part of the meeting for now. I am not mandating that you begin to allow these gatherings, so I ask you to use your pastoral wisdom for when you allow these meetings taking into account their importance and the trust level you have with the group.
3. **You may feel free to have Marriages and Funeral Masses and other Sacramental events with more than ten participants as long as you can ensure that social distancing will be respected, 50% occupancy is maintained and masks are worn especially when meeting indoors.** Again, I leave this to your pastoral wisdom to decide how your parish will begin to add larger gatherings for these sacramental celebrations. I believe parishes should still not allow wakes and receptions (funeral or wedding) because of the difficulty of ensuring that proper distancing will be practiced. There should be no preparation or serving of food to a large group as well. The Governors decree on phase two states:
 - Self-serve buffets and other common food service stations shall not be allowed
 - <https://opensafely.la.gov/DownloadFile.ashx?ID=23&TBL=tblPubliclinks>)
4. **Sacrament of Confirmation:** I have now done 5 Confirmations large and small and here are some thoughts on the Sacrament if you are the minister of the Sacrament. I just received today a response from the Congregation for Divine Worship that says that “the use by the minister of an instrument (glove or cotton swab) does not affect the validity of the sacrament of Confirmation. So, you could use a new cotton ball (for each candidate) dipped in Chrism to anoint and then burn the used cotton balls with Chrism after Mass. I have been using a small bowl (about an inch deep) of 90% alcohol with a small sponge immersed in the alcohol and after each anointing, I dip/wipe my thumb in/on the alcohol soaked sponge and then wipe it on a towel. (both bowl/towel either placed on a small table or held by the deacon.) I have been assured that this is sufficient. I have the candidates wear masks like we would for communion when they come up. I have been

providing an opportunity for pictures, in one case I took them with the candidate and their sponsor as they came into the Church to be seated before the ceremony began and another I stood alone or with the pastor on a first step of the sanctuary and the candidate and sponsor came and stood in front of us. In both cases we removed our masks for the picture. If you have any questions, feel free to give me a call.

5. There have been some questions on the Cooperative Mission Appeal. I leave this decision to you. If you feel it is best to cancel this year feel free to do so and reschedule for 2021. If you wish you can continue to welcome the priest scheduled as planned.
6. I believe we should begin to reach out to our homebound in a responsible and creative way to insure their safety and allow them to receive the Eucharist at their homes. The best option would be to ask if there is a family member who visits them regularly to aid in their care. If trustworthy, this family member could be trained to take the Eucharist to them as an Extraordinary Minister. Another option being used is meeting the person, if they can walk, at their door and visit with the homebound person and then conduct the rite for receiving Holy Communion outside of Mass at the door with the EM, deacon or priest not entering the house. When coming close to the person the minister of course would wear a mask. I do not have any solution if the person is bed bound and cannot easily walk to the door. If you have any doubt about the safety of any practice for a particular person contact the family to consult. I have no direct guidance on this except that we must be abundantly careful that we do not bring the virus into the homes of our elderly even if they say they do not care.

I know that many of you are moving forward within the boundaries given, I just wanted to be sure that everyone understood how to move forward. I know that many of you have unique events and situations that arise, I just ask that you use your pastoral judgement and apply the guidelines for Phase 2 for your special event. I am also aware that many people are becoming weary of wearing a mask but every indication I read is that it reduced the spread of the virus especially in closed environments. I am also aware that other Diocese of Louisiana have more flexible interpretation of this issue. In good conscience I think we should continue to encourage and continue to communicate to your parishioners that **all who attend Mass or any ceremony in Church are expected to wear masks**. If you have a strong reason for otherwise pass it on to someone on the Presbyteral Council and we will discuss the matter next week.

We will have an on-line Presbyteral Council Meeting next week, Tuesday, June 16, 2020 at 2:00pm. This will be the last meeting until August unless there is some extraordinary need. If you have any other areas of concern let a member of the Presbyteral Council bring your question to the meeting next Tuesday or feel free to give me a call.

Sincerely in Christ,

+Michael
Bishop of Baton Rouge