

Instructions for attending Mass at Sacred Heart, Fairfield or St. Ann, Hamilton during the duration of the COVID-19 Pandemic

General Information

- 1) The Archbishop reminds us that all Catholics living in or visiting the Archdiocese have been dispensed from their Sunday obligation, and thus their “desire” to participate in Mass can be fulfilled on any day of the week.
 - 2) After you exit your car, truck, or motorcycle in the parking lot; and until you return to same after Mass; the 6-foot rule for social distancing must be operative both outside and inside the building. The only exception is for members of the same “household.” (Obviously, if you are living at the same house and eating daily at the same table, there is no need to socially distance.)
 - 3) No two, three, or more people not in the same household may engage in group conversation after leaving their car, entering the building, exiting the building, or standing in the parking lot. In other words, “No stopping to chat!” (This is going to be very hard for me to abide.)
 - 4) At **Sacred Heart**: Always enter the Narthex of the church using the right side door and exit the church using what will then, from the other direction, be the right side door. These doors will be marked “IN” and “OUT.” Remember that the line of people entering the ingress door must still socially distance by six feet from one another. As regards the west parking lot door (formerly known as the senior parking lot) those entering will open the door and see if anyone is in the exiting corridor. If so, hold the door open and wait until the person (or people) has (or have) exited. Don’t crowd into the corridor as if two could pass without violating social distancing. This will require courtesy toward one another heretofore not necessary. Only those with impaired mobility should use the handicap door. Here again, courtesy will be required so two people don’t pass each other violating social distancing.
- At **St. Ann** (the two main doors facing Pleasant Avenue) please enter by the right hand door into the vestibule. To the degree that it is possible, exit the building by using the side door in the vestibule facing Hooven. At Mass times, try to restrict the Hooven handicapped entrance as much as possible for those who have limited mobility or those assisting them. As regards the door into the parking lot (facing the school) please try to limit one person entering or exiting at a time. Please exercise social distancing as a courtesy to those you encounter coming in or going out.
- 5) While on premises of the church, before you and your passengers leave your car, you **MUST** wear a face mask, scarf, bandana, or similar garment which will cover your nose or mouth at all

times. This nose and mouth covering must not be removed until you and your passengers are securely in your car ready to depart.

After entering the Building

6) At each entrance for both churches, there will be signs stating the following: Social Distancing: We are required by directives from the Governor to practice social distancing when we are seated in church. As a courtesy showing concern for all others seated in church, please **keep your mask or nose/mouth covering on at all times** for the benefit of all those around you. The rules of social distancing are different for three categories of attendee:

A) Families who live together in the same household DO NOT need to socially distance (six feet) from one another, **but MUST socially distance (six feet) from every other attendee.**

B) Couples who live in the same household together, DO NOT need to socially distance (six feet) from one another, **but MUST socially distance (six feet) from every other attendee.**

C) Single individuals without others who may live in his/her household **MUST socially distance (six feet) from every other attendee.**

Initially every other pew will have RED tape on the end, meaning “Don’t sit in this pew!” If (at some Masses) all other pews are filled, ushers may stagger individuals or couples in these previously prohibited areas if the six foot rule can still be adhered to by staggering individuals and couples in these pews, “still keeping them six feet from their nearest neighbor.” If all possible pew space (obeying social distancing) has been filled, “standing room only” will be allowable around the perimeter of both churches.

Summary regarding Seating: **The most critical component of this is that everyone keep their mask on while seated in church.** Some may perceive six feet as what is really four feet; but if everyone is wearing a mask or covering of the mouth and nose, no one can infect anyone else. It is truly a matter of courtesy and care for one another.

7) What if I come for Mass and church is already full? *Answer:* You can watch the Mass on your smart phone, pad, or laptop in your car outside in the parking lot. As soon as Mass is complete, you will be invited into church to receive Holy Communion. Of course this too will happen wearing mask and appropriate social distancing.

There will be no offertory procession with the bread and wine at either parish for the duration of the pandemic restrictions. At St. Ann, ushers will use long-handled collection baskets as usual for the collection. At Sacred Heart, we have been told not to use baskets that are passed from one person to another. Therefore, baskets for your donations will be available at the doors. The ushers will take care of collecting the baskets after everyone has entered the church.

Because we do not want parishioners standing in the communion line next to one another (a violation of social distancing): At St. Ann, people will file out the side aisles and (obeying social distancing) will move to the front to receive Holy Communion. They will go back to their pew

in the center aisle making sure they distance appropriately from one another. Again this will require us to be courteous to each other. At Sacred Heart Communion choreography will remain the same, but people in the center aisle coming to Holy Communion will need to stagger one side from the other so that social distancing is respected.

At both parishes, wear your mask when you come up for Holy Communion. **Communion in the hand is the only option allowed to us by the Bishops.** When you have received the Host in your hand, lift your mask with the other hand and place the Host in your mouth.

When leaving Mass, we ask that social distancing still be observed. Do not congregate in the aisles or vestibule or Narthex or parking lot. Keep your mask on until you get to your car.

8) WHAT WILL BE MISSING FOR THE TIME BEING?

There will be no Sign of Peace or Offertory processions. There will be no servers. There will be no Youth Greeters, and even the ushers will socially distance. The bishops have told us that we may NOT have choirs during the pandemic restrictions. Our music directors will provide well known songs as there will be no books in the pews. We will have disposable song sheets available. Please take these with you to be discarded after one use. We will still not be permitted to have Holy Water in the fonts at the doors. Bulletins will not be handed out, but will be available at the doors. The priest will not shake hands at the doors, but will offer some friendly gesture; (remember you can't see his face because of the mask) perhaps the 1960s peace sign, the Hawaiian Shaka, a simple wave, the elbow bump, or maybe even the Star Trek Vulcan "Live long and prosper" hand sign that some of us are genetically able to do. **Whatever gesture is used, it should communicate a smile behind the mask.**

9) Summary

Following these rigorous instructions just to be able to come to Mass may seem like a real pain! Believe me, I understand. But remember why we come to Mass. We come to Mass to sacramentally become the Mystical Body of Christ. Christ is always compassionate. We don't want anyone to contract a possibly deadly illness because they came to Mass. This would fly in the face of Jesus' directives to be compassionate. Remember no one who is medically compromised should risk coming to Mass. Out of Christian charity and respect for other's health; anyone who has any symptoms of a possibly contagious illness must NOT come to Mass. Practicing these annoying but medically necessary protocols (especially the wearing of a mask), evidences our good intentions to take all the necessary safety measures to keep everyone safe. If the virus is primarily spread by microscopic droplets of water from our mouths and noses, and if every person is wearing a mask, socially distancing, frequently sanitizing hands, etc.; it should be virtually impossible for the virus to spread. By submitting to these precautions, we are exhibiting our genuine and unwavering charity in Christ, as we exercise our constitutional rights to freedom of assembly, and the right to worship God as we please.