

COVID-19 POLICIES & PROCEDURES FOR PUBLIC MASS & SACRAMENTS

I. Preamble

This “COVID-19 Policies & Procedures for Public Mass & Sacraments” (“Policies”) revises and supersedes the “Timeline and Procedures for Resumption of Public Mass and Sacramental Life” jointly promulgated by Archbishop Coakley and Bishop Konderla on May 6, 2020. These Policies are to be read alongside the November 29, 2020 decree entitled “The Normality of Hope: A Word of Encouragement for Participating in the Eucharist” by Bishop Konderla.

These Policies address considerations concerning COVID-19 and the Mass. For issues regarding exposures and quarantine see “COVID-19 Policies & Procedures: Diocesan Catholic Schools” dated July 28, 2020 or “COVID-19 Policies & Procedures: Diocesan Catholic Parishes” dated August 19, 2020. All COVID-19 policies and procedures are available on the secure legal documents portal on the diocesan website or by contacting the Office of the Chancellor.

COVID-19 Protocols

II. Sunday Mass Obligation & Exemptions

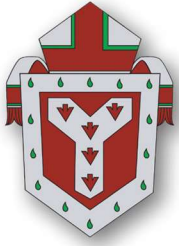
- A. **Obligation for Sunday Mass:** The dispensation for all Catholics from personally attending Sunday Mass is still in place. All Catholics do have an obligation to keep Holy the Lord’s Day. If not attending the Mass in person, Catholics should try to pray with the Mass on a live stream or engage in some other pious exercise such as scripture reading or rosary or the like.

III. Mass Protocols

- A. **Social Distancing Number:** Pastors may accommodate as many parishioners as prudent while maintaining a six (6) foot distance between households and/or individuals. This number of people will fluctuate based on the number of people in households versus individuals present at any given event.

B. Pre-Mass Protocols

1. **Pews:** Pews may be roped off or otherwise marked in order to adhere to the social distancing number of the parish. The pews that are utilized should be sanitized by parish employees or volunteers before and between Masses.
2. **Face Coverings:** CDC approved face coverings are highly recommended for all persons during Mass. Persons attending Mass should bring their own face coverings and parishes

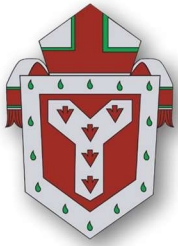


should make reasonable efforts to have face coverings available. If a municipality or other competent civil authority imposes a face covering mandate that is stricter than these Policies, then the parish should voluntarily comply unless otherwise directed by the Bishop.

3. **Sanitizer:** Those attending Mass are encouraged to bring their own hand sanitizer. The parishes should make reasonable efforts to provide hand sanitizer at key locations, e.g., the vestibule, back of the sanctuary, etc.
4. **Worship Aids & Music:** All hymnals, missalettes, and other similar materials remain prohibited unless the materials provided are single-use only and are discarded after each Mass.
5. **Miscellaneous Pre-Mass Protocols:** If possible, the exterior and interior doors of the parish facilities should be propped open to mitigate persons having to touch them. Cry rooms and similar facilities may be reopened if social distancing can be maintained. Holy water founts should remain empty and the parishes should continue to explore other methods to provide this important sacramental.

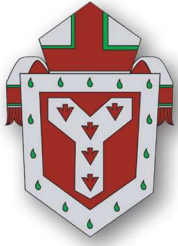
C. Entering for Mass

1. **Temperature Checks:** It is *recommended* that pastors, deacons, parish staff, ushers, extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, altar servers, and volunteers (e.g., those cleaning the sanctuary) have their temperature checked before Mass. Temperature guidelines are set by the CDC.
2. **Ushers:** Ushers are tasked with ensuring that the social distancing number (III.A) is enforced when the congregation is entering the sanctuary, receiving Holy Communion, and leaving the sanctuary.
3. **Sanitizer:** Those attending Mass are encouraged to sanitize their hands before entering the sanctuary and, upon entering, are encouraged to use their own sanitizer to wipe down or otherwise disinfect their pews.
4. **Visiting:** Those attending Mass should refrain from visiting other pews or otherwise moving about the sanctuary before, during, or after Mass.



D. Celebration of the Mass

1. **Singing & Music:** Congregational singing is permitted though any worship aids are to be single-use (III.B.4). Choirs must also engage in social distancing and, as such, may have to decrease in number.
2. **Clerics & Servers:** Priests, deacons, and altar servers should maintain social distancing as much as possible throughout the liturgy. It is highly recommended that altar servers wear face coverings throughout the entire liturgy. Priests and Deacons should wear face coverings when distributing Holy Communion and at all other times according to their own prudence.
3. **Readers:** Priests and deacons may serve as the lectors to mitigate the movement of individual throughout the sanctuary. Pastors may restore the use of readers according to their own prudence.
4. **Collection:** The collection during Mass should be done by placing a basket or other suitable receptacle at the entrance(s) of the sanctuary or as otherwise determined by the pastor. Parish leadership should instruct parishioners in how to make an online donation. For questions regarding online donations, please contact the Office of Stewardship & Development at the Chancery.
5. **Gifts:** The procession of the gifts is to be omitted. The gifts may be placed on the altar by the priest, deacon, or altar servers according to the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (“GIRM”).
6. **Sign of Peace:** The sign of peace between parishioners is to be omitted. After the priest offers the peace of Christ to the congregation and the people respond, the Mass continues in accordance with the GIRM.
7. **The Lord’s Prayer:** Holding hands during the Lord’s Prayer is prohibited, as, regardless of these Policies regarding COVID-19, it is not part of the Mass in the Roman rite.
8. **Holy Communion:** If possible, parishioners should sanitize their hands before receiving Holy Communion. Individuals not of the same household should maintain social distancing while in the Communion line. Distribution of the Precious Blood is prohibited. Holy Communion on the tongue is not prohibited but pastors may implement additional protocols, e.g., those who desire to receive on the tongue receive last. Priests, deacons, and extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion who are vulnerable to COVID-19 may, according to their own discretion, not distribute Holy Communion. All those distributing Holy Communion should sanitize their hands in view of the congregation immediately



prior to the distribution of our Lord and shall wear a face covering during the distribution as well. Those distributing Holy Communion should avoid touching the hand(s) of the recipient and should sanitize their hands after distribution is complete.

- E. **Exiting After Mass:** As noted, the doors should be propped open (III.B.5); the ushers will dismiss the pews in an orderly fashion to maintain social distancing (III.C.2); and persons leaving the sanctuary should maintain social distancing (III.A).
 - F. **Miscellaneous:** Restrooms shall remain open and parishes should make reasonable efforts to provide antibacterial soap and/or hand sanitizer. After Mass social gatherings and related activities (e.g., coffee, donuts, etc.) may only take place if social distancing and other pertinent protocols are enforced. Receptions and other similar activities may take place if they adhere to these Policies and any other diocesan protocols.
- IV. **Pastoral Discretion:** As pastors best understand their facilities and parishioners, pastors are encouraged to adopt and apply local policies and procedures that supplement these diocesan Policies. Pastoral discretion is not permitted to contradict these Policies unless otherwise approved by Bishop Konderla.

End of Policies

Revised 11-24-20
Office of the Bishop