



ROMAN CATHOLIC
DIOCESE
OF CHARLESTON
OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

To: All Priests

Re: Guidelines for Resumption of Mass

All priests are encouraged to provide reasonable and prudent measures to ensure everyone's safety, including their own. In order to resume regular Masses with a reduced capacity on May 11, 2020, pastors are required to inform their Dean as to how they will reopen in accordance with these restrictions:

- Signage at the door that states the following (diocese will provide signage next week):
 - worshipers who are sick should not enter the building,
 - worshipers are to use the restroom only **if absolutely necessary**,
 - worshipers are strongly encouraged to receive Communion in the hand.
- Limit activities to the sacraments only.
- No social gatherings before or after Mass, e.g. coffee and donuts.
- Limit the number of people in the worship space to 25% of capacity while providing ample space for visitors and attendees to maintain at least six feet of separation at all times (entering, sitting, Communion procession, leaving).
- Put markings on the floor to guide people on proper distancing guidelines when going up to receive Communion.
- Cordon off every other pew; only families may sit closely together.
- The sharing of the Sign of Peace between the faithful is to be omitted.
- No procession of the offertory gifts of bread and wine should take place. They will be brought forward from a credence table in the sanctuary.
- For offertory collections, do not pass baskets. Place them in a suitable location so people may drop in their offering. If you have long handled baskets for collections, you may use those, but they must be cleaned after each use. Also, be sure that the collection baskets are properly monitored as crime may increase.
- Ensure proper cleaning of frequently touched surfaces in the church after each Mass concludes, following CDC guidelines. Wherever possible, provide hand sanitizer at the church entrance.
- Remove holy water from the holy water fonts.
- Because of the difficulty in sanitizing hymnals and missalettes, disposable liturgical aids are recommended, if needed.
- If new liturgical aids are distributed at Mass, then they must be collected and destroyed after each Mass.
- Provide protective masks if possible: church social groups may wish to supply or assist.

- Have disinfectants and cleaning supplies readily available.
- Everyone is encouraged to continue to practice good hygiene.
- Pastors must direct parishioners who feel sick to remain at home, as should vulnerable and at-risk populations. If you are over 65 years of age, have respiratory issues or are immunocompromised, please stay home.
- People and priests are strongly encouraged to wear a mask.
- Those permitted on the sanctuary (lectors, deacons, altar servers) should be limited to ensure social distancing is maintained.

If adequate spacing, social distancing, and cleaning CANNOT be managed, and you cannot perform ALL of the requirements, then you cannot have more than 10 people per Mass, or you CANNOT reopen the parish at this time.

Holy Communion requirements:

- We strongly recommend that Holy Communion be received in the hand.
- Priests, deacons and extraordinary ministers should not contact exposed skin.
- Tongs or other tools are not to be used to distribute Communion.
- Communion under the Precious Blood is not to be offered at this time. You may wish to remind parishioners that Communion under the one species is valid.
- In the Communion line, people are to come up in a single file line and maintain a distance of six feet from the person in front of them.
- Deacons and extraordinary ministers should sanitize their hands either in the sanctuary or in the pew before Communion and not at the altar.
- If possible, extraordinary ministers should be given a travel-size bottle to clean their hands in the pews.
 - Be sure to remind them not to touch the pews as they come forward.
 - If this cannot be done, extraordinary ministers can wash their hands in the sacristy as they come forward to the sanctuary.
 - The individual should make sure that the sanitizer is dry before touching the host.
 - Gloves are not an acceptable alternative to handwashing.
- Communion to the homebound remains suspended due to the health risks posed to some of our most vulnerable parishioners. However, spouses and immediate family members may use a pyx to take Holy Communion to those staying in their home, following the EMHC parish directives.
- Parishes should continue to keep in regular contact with those who are homebound by phone, Facetime or other electronic communication.
- It is permissible at the pastor's discretion that Holy Communion be distributed at the conclusion of Mass as parishioners exit the church.
- Outdoor Masses are permitted as long as all of the above requirements are fulfilled.

Public celebrations of the sacraments are permitted as long as adequate spacing and social distancing are managed and maintained.

- The **Sacraments of Initiation and Reception into Full Communion** for those in the **RCIA** process are to be celebrated at the vigil for Pentecost (May 30) or on Pentecost Sunday.
 - The readings and prayers proper to Pentecost are to be used.
 - The sacraments of initiation and reception into full communion are to be integrated into the liturgy immediately after the homily using the rites as outlined in the RCIA.
 - There is a dispensation for the preparation rites.
 - New water must be used for each baptism, so there should be no baptism by full immersion.
 - All other safety concerns outlined above are to be observed.
 - A separate Mass may be celebrated specifically for these individuals.
- **Baptisms:**
 - Permitted to be celebrated individually (no communal baptisms).
 - New water is to be used and blessed for each baptism.
- **Confirmation:** All confirmations remain canceled until July 1.
- **First Communion and Reconciliation:** Celebrations should be postponed until Pentecost.
- **Weddings and funerals** may be celebrated with the limitations stated above.
- **Reconciliation:** The Bishop has granted general absolution through the month of May.
 - General absolution may be provided to those in attendance **only**.
 - Private reconciliation may commence on June 1.
- **Anointing of the Sick:**
 - Priests are asked to generously respond to those who are in proximate danger of death and who request anointing and viaticum.
 - The directions, procedures, and policies of all medical and care facilities must be strictly followed when visiting the ill.
 - The use of an instrument, such as a glove or cotton swab, is allowed for the anointing.
 - If you anoint a person who has COVID-19 outside a hospital, please check with your county health department with regard to the need to self-quarantine.
- **Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament:**
 - Each parish is encouraged to set some time aside every week for a celebration of the Rite of Eucharistic Adoration and Benediction.
 - Adoration may be provided in the main church (to assist with social distancing concerns and spacing) for specific hours.
 - Social distancing must be managed and maintained as indicated above.
 - Perpetual adoration should be postponed until the Feast of Corpus Christi.

Refer to the Centers for Disease Control for information about how the virus is spread, proper precautions and how to clean your facilities at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html>.