



October 28, 2020
corona@rcab.org

Regarding November All Souls Observances, Thanksgiving, Christmas and Church Ventilation

Most of what is below is given by way of suggestion.

A handful are protocols, and those are in **red**.

Please remember that in all that we do, masks that fit over the mouth and nose must be worn, socially distancing must be preserved, with a minimum of six feet between people who don't live in the same household, and proper ventilation must be provided in whatever way possible.

Ventilation

1. **Every effort must be made to ensure the maximum ventilation in our churches, even through the winter.**
2. If it is at all possible, windows and doors should remain open, although only during the time the church is occupied.
3. People should be informed of this early and probably repeatedly, so that they can come to Mass dressed warmly enough.

November All Souls Observances

1. Care should be taken to be sure that a parish "Book of Remembrance" does not become an occasion of the spread of the virus, through the use of a common pen, etc.
 - a. A volunteer could be present at a table taking names and writing them in the book.

- b. Names could be sent into the parish office by email or by online registration, and then written into the book by a parish secretary.
 - c. The book could be replaced all together by an appropriate parish webpage or a section of the bulletin.
2. If a parish is having an All Souls Mass, the oft-used practice of family members coming forward to light candles during the reading of the names is probably not safe.
 - a. A volunteer or server could light all of the candles.
 - b. A member of one of the families could be enlisted to light all of the candles.

Thanksgiving

1. Food distribution at Thanksgiving could proceed with caution.
2. **No unwrapped food should be distributed.**
3. **Social distancing protocols and the wearing of masks, even outside, should be strictly observed during the distribution.**
4. **Volunteers should wear masks and gloves, and their temperature should be taken before the event begins.**
5. Traditions like the distribution of Thanksgiving bread should not proceed as is, but could be replaced with the blessing of food that each family brings themselves.
6. If a food collection is taken up at Thanksgiving, there could be baskets at the back of the church, brought up by a couple of volunteers, rather than a general procession to the sanctuary with people carrying food.
7. When possible, the donation and distribution of gift cards rather than food might be a safer alternative this year.

Christmas

1. **PREPARING OUR PARISHIONERS:** Let our regular people know that this is going to be tough. Encourage them to charitable reaction.
2. **SUNDAY/HOLY DAY SUSPENSION OF OBLIGATION STILL IN EFFECT:** Remind people that Mass attendance still is not required.
3. **CONSIDER THE PERSONAL HEALTH RISK:** Remind our regular people that because there will be people there who are not usually there, and therefore not practiced in the protocols, things will likely be a bit more chaotic, and that they should make a judgment about whether or not to come with that perspective in mind.
4. **STREAMING:** Point people to streams:
 - a. Your own parish stream
 - b. CatholicTV
 - c. Other national streams
 - d. The Vatican
5. **STREAMING ON AND OFF CAMPUS:** Try to increase the number of people who can participate in person by streaming:
 - a. A church hall or lower church could be used IF there is sufficient ventilation. It would be staffed by volunteers, and Holy Communion would be brought to the participants at the right time.

- b. A remote space could be rented or borrowed - a school gymnasium, for instance - and the Mass streamed to that site, and Holy Communion distributed.
6. OUTDOOR MASSES: If the weather allows, an outdoor Mass could be a good last-minute overflow option.
7. REGISTRATION SYSTEMS: Even parishes that are not using registrations now should probably consider a registration system for Christmas.
 - a. This will allow a follow on email to the registration reminding them in writing of the protocols - masks, distancing, temperatures if in the red zone, come early but not too early, no congregational singing, list kept if in the red zone, no gathering after Mass.
 - b. This is also a good opportunity for parishes to fill in their email list.
8. STATE AND LOCAL REQUIREMENTS ARE ALWAYS SUBJECT TO CHANGE: Remind folks that State regulations and parish situations can change at the last minute, and that they should check in on the parish website before coming to Mass for any last-minute updates.
9. PROMOTING THE CATHOLIC TV MASS: Assuming that CatholicTV will be broadcasting from the Cathedral, they will likely make a "spot" that could be sent to Parishes to distribute to their email lists and on their social media encouraging people to attend Mass that way.
10. CELEBRATING THE OCTAVE OF CHRISTMAS: Encourage the faithful to celebrate not just Christmas Eve/Christmas Day, but to consider attending Mass on ANY day of the Octave of Christmas, since the celebration goes on. Since there is no obligation to attend on Christmas this year, people could be encouraged to register/attend on one of these other days. One way to facilitate greater attendance during the Octave and might be to add an early evening Mass such as a 5:30pm, and to consider programming some of the same seasonal music for these Masses.
11. UTILIZE EXPANDED MASS SCHEDULE OPTIONS: Parishes should take full advantage of the hours permitted for Christmas Eve Masses, in other words, to spread out Masses to allow for sanitization, but perhaps adding Masses at times not typically done, such as 8 or 9pm. Some might try: 3pm, 5:00pm, 7pm, 9pm, Midnight.
12. MUSIC: Due to the nature of Christmas repertoire, it may be difficult if not impossible to restrain the impulse of people in the congregation to sing. While this familiar music can be included, take care to limit the number of such hymns if possible.
13. All cantors, pianist/organist/guitarist, and other singers should wear well-fitted masks even while singing. A "well-fitted" mask: 1) has no gaps, 2) fully covers the nose, and 3) is tight around the edges.
14. During the celebration of Christmas Masses and worship events leading up to Christmas (like Lessons and Carols), a parish could have up to four singers plus the main accompanist (e.g. Organ/Piano/Guitar) and an additional instrument (e.g. Trumpet)
 - a. Even if the instrumentalists also sing, there should be no more than four singers.
 - b. There should be a clear instruction that the congregation is not to sing.
 - c. All musicians must be a minimum of six feet from each other in all directions.
 - d. Singers must stand in a straight line, all facing one way, and not in the traditional curved formation.

- e. It is preferable that the singers be in the choir loft, distanced from each other and masked. If that is not possible, they should be as far from the congregation as possible.
 - f. Rehearsal parameters: Because rehearsal involves continuous singing for an extended period of time, unlike the Mass with its intermittent singing, some different considerations come into play
 - i. Space: Use a very large space with proper airflow and high ceilings, ideally the church itself, a large parish hall or gymnasium. This makes it comparable to singing outside
 - ii. Time: **Maximum rehearsal time of 30 minute intervals.**
 - iii. Breaks: Take a 20-minute break. All participants must leave the room and allow the air to cycle.
 - g. Any wind instrumentalists should use an appropriate mask for themselves and for their instrument
 - h. See the Office of Worship Website for further documentation and supporting studies for these protocols: <https://www.bostoncatholic.org/divine-worship>
15. GIVING TREES: Giving trees are permitted this year with encouragement to minimize contact in the process - checking people off a list of gift options or online sign up as opposed to removing and returning tags from the tree.
16. CHRISTMAS PAGEANTS:
- a. Outdoors: Pageants can be held outdoors, weather permitting, just as many Living Nativities are. For some roles that require physical proximity (i.e. the Holy Family, the Angels), persons playing those roles could all be members of the same household. Masks should still be worn by all participants and spectators even outdoors.
 - b. Online: Different families could pre-record different scenes at home and a video editor could splice them together to be shown at a pre-determined time, and then made available online throughout the Christmas season. Have family watch party at home.
17. BOOK AND OTHER GIVEAWAYS: It is permitted to give away books, such as Dynamic Catholic/Matthew Kelly books, or other items such as ornaments, etc., as long as masked parish volunteers hand out these items one by one, just as for the bulletin or the Pilot. It is recommended to announce to the congregation after Communion, or another appropriate time, that these volunteers will be offering these giveaways so that the faithful know ahead of time what is being offered to them as they exit. **It is not permitted to leave any such items on tables for the taking during a Christmas, Holy Day or Sunday Mass to reduce the chances of people gathering around and handling different items.**
18. LESSONS AND CAROLS/CHRISTMAS CONCERTS: This could be done live under the same restrictions as for Mass, OR as a livestreamed or pre-recorded/video-edited event—with a small, socially-distanced, masked Schola of up to 4 singers (SATB) who may sing the musical meditations along with an instrumentalist. Wind instruments are permitted with an appropriate covering. See number fourteen above. Parishes in red-designated communities must postpone these events until out of the red category.

