



Plan for Limited Reopening of Masses

Date of Implementation: Weekend of May 9/10

Updated May 8, 2020

INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT

In order to open Masses, parishes must follow the directives and work within the guidelines outlined in this document. These directives and guidelines will remain in force until further notice or changes by the State allow for or require revision. It is important to remember that these directives and guidelines are not intended to be permanent adjustments to normal practice but temporary responses to the pandemic. Reopening will not mean an immediate return to our practices prior to suspension of public Masses. Your patience, understanding and cooperation are appreciated.

Due to different circumstances at each parish, reopening for Masses is left to the prudential judgment of the pastor. Charity and understanding are asked of all the faithful as parishes begin to reopen Masses. One parish may not be able to offer the same opportunities as a neighboring parish due to size, space limitations or other circumstances (e.g. local COVID positive cases, underlying health condition of pastor, etc.). In all cases, a pastor should communicate clearly and frequently with his parishioners about his plan, the process used for sign-ups and other details about reopening Masses.

The Pastoral Center will serve as a resource to pastors and parishes as they prepare their plans for reopening Masses. Under the direction of Deacon Kevin Welch, the staff of the Pastoral Ministries and Clergy departments will be available for each parish to consult, request assistance, discuss plans, share ideas and ask questions about reopening Masses. Email DPM@archdpdx.org.

General Principles

- Mass attendance will be limited in accord with government directives (e.g. 25, 50, 250).
- Social distancing must be practiced at all times within churches (minimum of six feet apart except members of the same household).
- A general dispensation from the Sunday Mass obligation will remain in place.
- Anyone attending Mass does so at their own risk. Vulnerable, at-risk and otherwise concerned persons should remain home.
- Anyone who has even the slightest symptoms or feelings of sickness must remain home.
- Livestreaming of Masses will continue to be encouraged.

- Restrictions and guidelines here pertain to all Masses, including weddings, funerals, etc.

Limited Reopening of Masses

1. Pastors/Administrators of parishes will have the final decision on what can and may be done in their specific churches when reopening Masses.
2. If a parish is unable for practical or other reasons to strictly maintain social distancing and perform the cleaning requirements as indicated in this document, the parish cannot open Masses.
3. Pastors must communicate clearly and effectively with their parishioners about their plans for reopening (or not reopening) Masses.
4. Charity and understanding are asked of all the faithful as parishes begin to reopen Masses. One parish may not be able to offer the same opportunities as a neighboring parish due to size, space limitations or other circumstances (e.g. local COVID positive cases).
5. Priests are encouraged to offer two Masses during weekdays (morning and evening) and if possible, additional Masses on the weekends to allow as many people as possible in a given period to have the opportunity to attend Holy Mass and receive the Eucharist. The Mass schedule should be published. The normal approval process for adding/dropping or otherwise changing the parish Mass schedule is suspended until public gathering restrictions are eliminated or until further notice. Please send your Mass schedule, including the changes, to your area vicar.
6. A first-come, first-served system as well as exclusively online or email sign-up systems should be avoided. These methods might exclude many who otherwise would wish to attend (e.g. those disabled, without Internet access or technical savvy). Multiple and easily accessible ways of sign-up should be employed. For example, through a combination of methods including online sign-ups, email, phone calls and written sign-ups. Or, a phone call only sign-up method could work.
7. Pastors and staff should develop a sign-up system for attending Holy Mass. Simple is best. It is recommended that parishes solicit the names of all the faithful in their community who would like to attend Holy Mass. A database or list should be kept. The first and last name of each person who wishes to attend should be collected, along with the best contact info for them.
8. Individuals/families will be allowed to attend Mass only once in a given period as determined by the pastor (one week, two weeks, three weeks or four weeks), depending upon the size of the community. This is to allow as many people in the parish as possible the opportunity to attend Mass. Since the Sunday Mass obligation remains lifted, it is not necessary for the faithful to attend Mass on Sundays.
9. The faithful are asked to sign-up for Mass at only one parish.
10. Parishes are discouraged from verifying whether an individual who signs-up for their Mass rotation is registered or otherwise from their parish.
11. Depending upon the system, sign-ups might allow the faithful to choose the Mass they prefer to attend or indicate if there are specific Mass times they cannot attend.

12. The pastor will determine how best to assign specific names to specific Mass times. Every sense of fairness must be maintained. Aside from those with special needs, any preferential treatment should be avoided.
13. Mass organizers should remember that the maximum number allowed includes the priest, liturgical ministers, livestream videographers and anyone else present during Mass. For this reason, the total number of ministers/volunteers should be reduced to a bare minimum.
14. It may be necessary to appoint a hospitality minister to ensure social distancing. Except for members of the same household, the faithful must always remain at least six feet apart during the Mass.
15. A record of the list of those who signed-up and attended each Mass must be maintained. In the event of a COVID positive case, the parish must assist public officials with tracing and contacting everyone who may have been exposed.
16. Use of face masks/coverings is recommended by the CDC. Use of face masks/coverings at Masses is left to individual discretion. Only those with masks can join in congregational singing.
17. Masses should normally be conducted in the church. The reopening should take place in strict accord with the directives and numbers allowed by the State.
18. Parking lot or open-air Masses to expand the celebration numbers for Masses are not envisioned at this time.

Masses should be of shorter duration

- Time spent in proximity increases risk of transmission. For this reason, pastors and priest celebrants are asked to employ legitimate options as given in the Roman Missal to keep Masses to a shorter duration.
- This may also make it easier for priests to offer additional Masses.
- Considerations: announcements could be eliminated or kept brief, a priest celebrant could enter from the sacristy, if a cantor is used, sing only one verse of songs, use a shorter Penitential Act, use shorter version of readings when an option, reduce the time of the homily, limit the general intercessions, exit directly to the sacristy, purify vessels after Mass, etc.

Liturgical practices currently proscribed will remain proscribed

1. No Sign of Peace
2. No distribution of the Precious Blood
3. No holy water in fonts
4. Sunday Masses can only be offered beginning at 4pm on Saturday through Midnight on Sunday. Sunday Masses cannot be offered on weekdays.

Additional, temporary liturgical restrictions:

1. No congregational singing (unless those in the congregation are wearing masks). Cantors need not wear masks if they are at least thirty feet away from the people in front of them. This minimizes the potential spread of infection through projected respiratory droplets.
2. No collection is taken during the Mass (instead, baskets can be placed near the entrance or in another accessible location).
3. No presentation of the gifts by the faithful.

Liturgical consideration:

- A celebrant may want to avoid the use of choirs and use cantors instead (if needed) since singers/musicians count against the total numbers allowed at Mass and congregational singing is limited or avoided.

In addition, the following must be observed:

1. All missalettes, pew cards, pencils and other loose items in the pews must be removed.
2. As noted above, collection baskets cannot be passed from person to person or otherwise presented to the faithful. Collection baskets can be placed in an accessible location (e.g. near the entrance of the church) with someone assigned to monitor them.
3. Individual bulletins cannot be distributed. Provide online or make necessary, brief announcements only.
4. Children's liturgy of the Word must be discontinued.

Communion

1. **Priests and Extraordinary Ministers must wear masks/face coverings while they are distributing Holy Communion. Outside of the distribution of Holy Communion, priests are not required to wear masks/face coverings. A priest is not forbidden from wearing a face covering throughout the celebration of the Eucharist.**
2. Social distancing must be maintained during the Communion procession.
3. Single file Communion lines only.
4. Great care must be taken by ministers when distributing Holy Communion. Skin to skin contact should be carefully avoided. If contact is made, the priest or Extraordinary Minister should sanitize their hands before continuing distribution. As some who are present may perceive reception of Holy Communion on the tongue as a greater risk to safety, those who wish to receive on the tongue are kindly asked to wait until the end of the line to present themselves for Holy Communion.
5. Ministers of Holy Communion are encouraged to sanitize their hands immediately after receiving Holy Communion themselves and prior to distributing Holy Communion to the faithful.

6. If a priest has underlying health conditions or is otherwise unable, he may have Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion distribute in his place: "Extraordinary ministers may distribute Holy Communion at eucharistic celebrations only when there are no ordained ministers present or when those ordained ministers present at a liturgical celebration are truly unable to distribute Holy Communion" (*Ecclesia de Mystero* 8.2). Members of the same household need not observe social distancing with one another during the Communion procession.
7. Holy Communion is to be distributed by hand in the normal fashion. Ministers may not use gloves (or devices or instruments) to distribute Holy Communion.

Entrances and Exits

1. Churches should designate one place of entrance when possible (at least one entrance should be accessible) in order to control the numbers of people coming in. Once the maximum is reached, no one else can be allowed entrance. Door monitor(s) will be needed. Only those on the list can enter. Maximum number allowed must never be exceeded. Maximum number includes the priest, ministers, livestream videographers and anyone else in the space during Mass.
2. People who simply show-up for Mass and must be turned away at the entrance should be given a number to call or otherwise given a way to add their name(s) to the sign-up list for Mass. Please be pastorally sensitive but firm in turning them away.
3. When possible, entrance doors should be propped open as people enter so the faithful do not need to touch the handles or doors to enter. They can be closed when Mass begins.
4. When possible, multiple exits should be used at the end of Mass to expedite departure and minimize chances of people encountering one another. In all cases, social distancing must be observed.
5. When possible, exit doors should be propped open after Mass to allow the faithful to exit without touching the doors or handles.
6. Celebrant must maintain social distance if greeting people after Mass.

Cleaning and Sanitizing

1. Cleaning and sanitizing of common use areas will take place after every Mass.
2. Pastors will need to organize volunteers to clean and sanitize the pews and other common use areas, including restrooms, immediately after Mass.
3. To the extent possible, sanitizing solution or wipes should be provided to the faithful upon entrance & exit.
4. After they have been purified, Communion vessels should be washed with soap and water following each Mass.

Parish Practical Considerations

The following are suggestions and guidelines for the pastor and parishes:

- Have adequate stock of hand sanitizer and other cleaning supplies available.
- Social distancing policy should be posted on the church doors.
- Ensure liturgical ministers observe social distancing to the extent possible when performing their ministries.
- SEATING: Restrict seating to every alternate pew (or row of seats) to maintain distancing. Seating to be used should be clearly marked.
- Restroom use and cleaning policy must be developed by each parish (e.g. one at a time use only; cleaned and sanitized immediately following each Mass).
- Parish cry-rooms may need to be closed or restricted to one family. If they are used, they will need to be carefully cleaned after use.
- Parish child-care during Masses should be discontinued until further notice.
- Signs could be placed on church doors to indicate the Mass schedule and provide a telephone number and email address for people wanting to put their names on a list to attend Mass.
- Social gatherings before or after Mass (including coffee & donuts) should not take place. Providing access to the celebration of Holy Mass and reception of Holy Communion during Mass is the purpose for reopening Masses.
- Pastors are encouraged to prepare a written or videotaped “welcome back” message that includes some details, including practical information, about the reopening transition.
- The pastor must ensure effective and clear communication with his parishioners about the process used for sign-ups and other details about reopening Masses.
- In some cases, a smaller parish in a vicariate may be in position to assist a larger parish by allowing people from the larger parish to sign-up for some of its Masses. This should be coordinated by the pastors in consultation with the area vicar.

Other

- These directives and guidelines are prepared specifically for the limited reopening of Masses. Continue to follow previously released instructions and guidance for the other sacraments.
- Prudential judgments about other parish activities are not governed by these instructions but should take them into account. Any other parish activities must always observe public directives, especially social distancing.
- Area vicars will be asked to provide support and help monitor reopening of Masses in their vicariates. Coordination by vicariate is important.
- Pastors in a vicariate should communicate their plans for reopening to their area vicar.