

Diocese of Norwich

Guidelines for the Restoration of Public Worship

Our main priority is the restoration of the public worship of God through the celebration of Mass and the sacraments in a way that conforms with established liturgical norms and mandates issued by civil authorities, so that health and well-being of the faithful and clergy may be reasonably safeguarded.

SUNDAY OBLIGATION

1. The obligation to attend Sunday Mass will remain dispensed for all the faithful in the Diocese of Norwich until further notice. Since Sunday is still the Lord's Day, the faithful are encouraged to do one of the following if not attending Mass:

- a. Read and reflect on the Sunday scriptures;
- b. Pray the rosary reflecting on the Glorious Mysteries;
- c. Watch the Sunday Mass on TV, or via the internet.

THE CHURCH BUILDING

2. Each pastor/parish administrator will be responsible for developing a parish plan for the restoration of public worship under the following criteria.

Assessing the Space

3. Since "social distancing" will remain in place for the foreseeable future, seating must provide for 6 feet of free distance, in all directions, between individuals and/or households. Pastors should see to it that available seating is clearly marked. Maintaining social distancing most likely will require that at a minimum every other pew be closed-off, more may be necessary, i.e. every third row, in order that open pews be 6 feet apart. A careful measurement of the seating area will be required to ensure social distancing requirements are met.

4. In areas where the faithful may stand in line, (for example, waiting to go to confession or to receive Holy Communion), place tape on the floor to indicate proper spacing (6 feet) between persons.

5. Pastors should also determine, in advance, how many people can be in church according to social distancing rules. This number may vary in actual practice, since members of a household or those who came to church in the same vehicle are not required to social distance from each

other. The number of faithful attending **must** always remain within the limits established by state and local authorities.

Holy Water

6. Standing Holy Water should be removed from all fonts in the church. Pastors may want to make available small individual bottles of Holy Water for the faithful.

Hymnals

7. Hymnals and missalettes are to be removed from the pew racks. One-time use worship aids may be used but are to be disposed of immediately after use. All copyright laws must be observed in preparing one-time use printed material.

8. The faithful may be reminded of online sources for daily readings, that may be accessed on their smart phones.

Mass Schedule

9. Since the social distancing requirement will greatly reduce the number of faithful who may attend Mass, pastors/parish administrators may want to consider implementing a temporary Mass schedule that would increase the number of Masses. These Masses should have sufficient time in between to avoid overcrowding at the building entrances.

10. The faithful should be alerted in advance that seating will be limited due to social distancing rules.

11. Since the Sunday Obligation is suspended, pastors may also want to encourage the faithful to consider attending a Mass on a weekday, instead of Sunday, to reduce the numbers at Sunday Mass.

12. In parishes or clusters with multiple church buildings, pastors/parish administrators may want to hold public worship in the building(s) that can accommodate the largest number of faithful while leaving other church buildings closed for the time being.

Maintaining a Clean Environment

13. Pastors/parish administrators are to ensure that church buildings are frequently cleaned especially surfaces that are commonly touched.

14. Pastors should ensure the building's HVAC system is functioning properly to allow for adequate ventilation. System filters should be kept clean. If possible, consider opening windows while the building is occupied.

15. Wherever feasible, hand sanitizer should be made available near building entrances. If not available, the faithful should be reminded to carry their own hand sanitizer.

16. Consider propping doors open before and after Mass to minimize contact with commonly touched surfaces.

Communication and Signage

17. In advance of reopening, pastors/parish administrators are to clearly communicate with the faithful reminding them of their responsibilities in attending public Mass.

18. Since seating is limited, the faithful should be clearly reminded beforehand that they may not be able to attend the Mass they wish if the church reaches capacity.

19. Those who are considered “high risk” due to age or underlying health condition, are encouraged to stay home.

20. It would be helpful if responsibilities of the faithful were posted at the entrances to the building.

- a. **Wash Hands Frequently.** If hand washing is not possible, hand sanitizer should be used.
- b. **Don’t touch your face.**
- c. **Maintain Social Distancing.**
- d. **Wear a Mask.** According to state mandate, face mask that cover both nose and mouth are required of all attending public worship. The use of a face mask is not required by any person who by using it, will act contrary to his or her health or safety due to a medical condition. Children under the age of 5 are not required to wear a mask.
- e. **Stay home.** If you are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, or not feeling well.

THE CELEBRATION OF MASS AND RECEPTION OF HOLY COMMUNION

21. Wherever possible, pastors are encouraged to live-stream at least one Sunday Mass for those who are unable to attend.

22. Before celebrating Mass, the priest must thoroughly wash and dry his hands.

23. During the celebration of Mass, priests may not wear face masks or gloves.

Music

24. Choirs are to be discontinued until further notice and congregational singing is discouraged. However, a cantor may be used to sing the responses.

Liturgical Ministers

25. Social distancing should be maintained in the sanctuary, particularly regarding seating. Therefore, the use of altar servers and readers, should be limited, if not discontinued, until further notice.

26. Ushers and greeters may assist the faithful in finding seats and holding doors to minimize contact with commonly touched surfaces. Those who serve in this capacity are to wear masks and should not be “high-risk” due to age or underlying health condition.

27. The use of extra-ordinary ministers of Holy Communion is to be discontinued until further notice. However, by exception, an extra-ordinary minister of Holy Communion may take the place of priest/deacon who is “high risk” due to age or underlying health condition in distributing Holy Communion, provided the extra-ordinary minister of Holy Communion is not also “high risk.”

Processions

28. The entrance and recessional processions should be suspended. Wherever possible the celebrant and assisting ministers should enter the sanctuary by the shortest route, avoiding passing through the midst of the congregation.

Offertory Collection

29. The use of collection baskets that are passed between the faithful is to be discontinued until further notice. In place of the use of the collection basket with a long handle, pastors should make available a central depository at the entrance(s) to the church, where the faithful can place their offerings.

30. Pastors may also want to encourage parishioners to make use of electronic giving.

Offertory Procession

31. The offertory procession with the bread and wine is to be discontinued until further notice.

32. The celebrant should bring the missal, chalice, ciborium, and cruets of wine and water to the altar himself.

33. The lavabo should be done by the celebrant alone at the credence table.

34. The ciboria with hosts placed on the altar for consecration should be covered.

Sign of Peace

35. The exchange of the Sign of Peace remains suspended until further notice.

Holy Communion in a Concelebrated Mass

36. In a Mass with concelebrants, the celebrant and concelebrants receive the Precious Blood by means of intinction.

Holy Communion in a Mass with a Deacon

37. In a Mass in which a deacon assists, two chalices should be prepared: one for the celebrant and one for the deacon.

Reception of Holy Communion by the Faithful

38. With the restoration of public worship and the reception of Holy Communion, an opportunity exists for pastors, in a sensitive way, to remind the faithful about the proper disposition necessary for the reception of Holy Communion.

- a. Our attendance is first and foremost for the worship of Almighty God. The faithful are not required to receive Holy Communion every time they attend Mass.
- b. All who present themselves for Holy Communion should be properly prepared to receive.
- c. This preparation involves a careful examination of conscience and should regularly involve the Sacrament of Penance.

39. Those not receiving Holy Communion should be encouraged to make an Act of Spiritual Communion.

An Act of Spiritual Communion

St. Alphonsus Liguori

My Jesus, I believe that You are present in the Most Holy Sacrament.

I love You above all things, and I desire to receive You into my soul.

Since I cannot at this moment receive You sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart.

I embrace You as if You were already there and unite myself wholly to You.

Never permit me to be separated from You.

Amen.

40. It should be made clear to the faithful that there is no completely sterile way to distribute and receive Holy Communion.

41. The faithful may be encouraged to receive Holy Communion in the hand, but they cannot be compelled to do so.

Distribution of Holy Communion after Mass

42. The distribution of Holy Communion should take place **after** Mass has concluded, which will allow for a staggered dismissal of the faithful from church and avoid overcrowding at the doors of the church. The faithful should nevertheless be encouraged to make an appropriate thanksgiving after receiving.

43. Only priests or deacons should distribute Holy Communion. (See paragraph #27 for the exception).

44. At the start of Mass, or at a suitable point during Mass, the priest should explain that those who desire to receive Holy Communion may do so after the conclusion of the Mass. He may add that the faithful should maintain a 6-foot distance from each other as they come forward for Holy Communion.

45. Enough hosts for distribution to the faithful should be consecrated at the Mass.

46. The priest (and, if present, the deacon) consume the Eucharist in the usual way but do not immediately proceed to distribute Communion to the faithful. Rather, the newly-consecrated hosts are placed in the tabernacle awaiting the conclusion of the Mass.

47. After the concluding blessing and the dismissal, the priest (and deacon, if present) remain in the sanctuary. At the chair, the priest removes his chasuble and the deacon removes his dalmatic.

48. A small ablution cup of isopropyl or ethyl alcohol (70% or greater) and purificator should be available at the communion station so that in the event of contact with the faithful, the priest may quickly sanitize and dry his fingers. Following the distribution of Holy Communion, the alcohol should be poured into the sacrarium.

49. The priest then thoroughly washes and dries his hands in the sacristy or uses hand sanitizer (allowing it to completely dry) immediately before approaching the tabernacle.

50. Those distributing Holy Communion are required to wear a face mask, however, the use of gloves while handling the Blessed Sacrament is **forbidden**.

51. Vested in alb and stole, the priest retrieves the newly-consecrated hosts from the tabernacle and returns to the altar.

52. Holding up a single host, he says: *“Behold the Lamb of God. Behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.”* He then leads the people in saying: *“Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word, and my soul shall be healed.”*

53. The priest proceeds to the place prepared for distribution of Holy Communion and stands next to a table with the ablution cup and purificator to distribute Holy Communion.

54. The faithful should remove their face coverings just as they are about to receive Holy Communion, and immediately replace their face covering once Holy Communion is received.

55. Holy Communion **may not** be received in a **gloved** hand.

56. If the priest senses that his fingers have touched the communicant, he should pause, and purify his fingers in the alcohol and dry them on the purificator

57. He may repeat this process as often as he judges necessary during the distribution of Holy Communion. It is not necessary, however, for him to sanitize his fingers between each communicant, unless he makes actual contact.

58. At the conclusion of the distribution of Holy Communion, the priest returns the remaining hosts to the tabernacle.

59. The faithful may depart after making a brief prayer of thanksgiving.

60. After distributing Holy Communion, the priest should again thoroughly wash his hands.

Cleaning Vessels

61. Following Mass, all vessels should be thoroughly washed, including: Communion vessels (after being purified), wine and water cruets, and bowl for the lavabo.