



LITURGICAL GUIDELINES CONCERNING LIMITED PUBLIC MASS

These guidelines remain in effect until revised by the Office of Liturgy and Worship

As the coronavirus pandemic brought about the decision to temporarily suspend in-person public Mass attendance throughout the diocese, the Bishop, in consultation with the episcopal sees of Colorado and the priests, deacons and parish representatives of the Diocese of Pueblo, engaged the collaborative process between the Church, civil leaders and medical experts. The fruit of this process resulted in 3 major principles for gradual and prudent forward steps to begin opening up limited in-person public Mass attendance. These 3 principles are: 1) Intentional social distancing, 2) Limited Mass attendance, 3) Necessary liturgical changes.

Please remember that no set of guidelines can address every scenario nor can they create uniformity across the various locations in the Diocese of Pueblo. The principle of subsidiarity remains in place. There are twenty counties in the Diocese and each will reopen public venues according to their local criteria and safety, and to suit their particular schedule. Therefore, Pastors and Parishes should be aware of the recommendations of their local municipality or county and be prepared to act accordingly.

Please also remember to pray for a spirit of care, concern, and charity as we move through this transition. Let us be gentle with one another and bring forth the Good News of Jesus!

1. CONSIDERATIONS FOR THOSE PARTICIPATING IN MASS

- 1.1 **LIMITED NUMBERS**—Due to the civil recommendations, the number of people who will be able to attend any given Mass will be greatly reduced. The limited public offering of Mass is an outreach to those who may safely attend. It will not satisfy our expectations of regular Mass attendance.
- 1.2 **GENERAL DISPENSATION FROM THE OBLIGATION OF ATTENDANCE AT SUNDAY LITURGY**—Has been granted by the Bishop until further notice. The opening of daily Masses provides an opportunity for worship and communion for the faithful to look forward to, as can be offered in charity, and this opportunity should be promoted.
- 1.3 **WEIGH THE RISK**—Even with best practices, the risk of infection exists anytime a person leaves their house. Anyone in a higher risk category, or showing any symptoms of illness, should be encouraged to stay home. Participation in livestreamed or recorded Mass along with making a spiritual communion, keeps us in mind of our love of God and neighbor during these troubling times, and is a source of true consolation.
- 1.4 **GERM MITIGATION**—Those who attend Mass should plan to wear a mask or cloth face covering, refrain from unnecessarily touching surfaces, respect social distancing, use hand sanitizer, follow directions for seating in the designated worship space, and observe other safety precautions as needed.

1.5 **CHILDREN**—We hope there are families who can attend these limited public Masses with their children. But be sure they bring masks and understand the social distancing needed (families living together don't need to social distance from each other).

1.6 **SCHEDULING LIMITED PUBLIC MASS**—The faithful should check with their parish in advance as to when Masses are offered each day and to follow the process for attending Mass. Once the recommended attendance for a particular Mass has been reached, they should be encouraged/given an option for attendance at a Mass at a subsequent time. They should also be encouraged that, while the Sunday obligation had been dispensed, they are most welcome at the daily Masses as they are available.

2. **CONSIDERATIONS FOR PARISHES**

2.1 **TEMPORARY MASS TIMES RESCHEDULING AND/OR ADDITIONAL MASSES**—Pastors may consider temporarily adjusting the Mass times and frequently relevant to the current situation. Priests may celebrate up to two Masses each day and three Masses on Sunday during this time.

2.2 **SCHEDULING ATTENDEES**—at the parish level a fair and consistent method should be developed for scheduling Mass attendance rotations. This method should be communicated to parishioners. Parishes are encouraged to choose one person who understands the tool or method being used to oversee the process and should be able to pastorally help people through the process of attending a particular Mass or offering the option of additional Mass opportunities available at a later time.

2.3 **MANAGING PEOPLE FLOW**—No matter the size of the group allowed by the civil recommendations, clear instructions should be given so that pinch points do not infringe upon social distancing. For example, pews can be marked with tape, so the people know where to sit. Directions in which people can travel should be made clear

2.4 **SANITIZING THE WORSHIP SPACE**—Should be done following each liturgy. See the recommendations at <http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html>

2.5 **LOCATION**—Pastors may use spaces other than, or in addition to the main church for the celebration Mass. This may include outdoor spaces, gyms, hall, etc. Celebrations of the Sacrament of Matrimony must continue to be held in the Church as always.

2.6 **COMMUNICATION**—Over-communication is key at this time. Parishes should use all possible means, e.g. phone calls, email, mailing lists, announcements at livestream Masses, etc. to communicate the process involved and to stay in touch with parishioners, especially regarding the attendance options for Mass. The coronavirus situation is yet fluid and the communications paths need to be strong. All parishes are encouraged to remind parishioners to update their current parish contact information.

3. LITURGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 **SOcial DISTANCE**—Create a proper distance between those in the sanctuary and those participating in Mass (minimum of 6 feet). Taping 6 feet marks on the floor of spaces leading up to where communion is distributed may be helpful.
- 3.2 **THE LORD’S PRAYER**—When praying the Our Father, we should not hold hands. Simply extend your hands toward heaven or fold your hands in prayer.
- 3.3 **SIGN OF PEACE**—Simply nod your head to those around. Avoid bodily contact.
- 3.4 **HOLY COMMUNION**—Is limited to the faithful under one specie of the Precious Body at this time. The presider, concelebrating priests and deacons should also consume the Precious Blood. Congregations are strongly encouraged to receive communion in the hand at this time.
- 3.5 **GIFTS OF BREAD AND WINE**—Can be kept covered on the credence table or placed with the vessels directly on the altar before Mass begins. There is no offertory procession. Placing the hosts that will be distributed to the faithful in a separate ciborium or paten; on a separate corporal on the altar, away from the presider’s chalice and paten minimizes the spread of germs.
- 3.6 **COLLECTION**—A centralized basket should be visible and pointed out during Mass for people who wish to make a donation in person. Collection baskets should not be passed from person to person. Long handled baskets may also be used if available. It is important that online opportunities for giving be mentioned, especially that parishioners support their parishes through these difficult times.
- 3.7 **HOLY WATER**—Is to be removed from the fonts. Hand sanitizer should be made available at all entrances.
- 3.8 **MUSIC**—It has been demonstrated that singing can increase the spread of the virus. Singing in choirs and congregation is not encouraged. A cantor can provide music but should stay 12 feet from other ministers.
- 3.9 **MINISTERS**—Should be kept at a minimum.
- 3.10 **HYMNALS, MISSALS, PRAYER BOOKS**—Due to the difficulties in sanitizing worship spaces between liturgies, parishes are asked to remove them from use. Parishioners are invited to bring their own missals and prayer books.

4. RECEIVING AND DISTRIBUTING HOLY COMMUNION

- 4.1 The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Committee on Divine Worship released resources regarding sacramental celebrations prepared by members of the Thomistic Institute at the Pontifical Faculty of the Dominican House of Studies in Washington, D.C. Below is the method that pastors are asked to use for the receiving and distributing of Holy Communion.

- 4.2 If priests are considered vulnerable population, he may choose to wear a mask for Mass. But, as a general rule, masks or cloth face coverings must only be worn to distribute Holy Communion. Holy Communion may not be distributed with gloves, nor may it be received in the hand if a member of the faithful is wearing gloves.
- 4.3 At the start of Mass, or at a suitable point during the Mass, the priest explains that those who desire to receive Holy Communion may do so at the conclusion of the Mass. He may add that the faithful should maintain the 6-foot social distancing from each other as they approach for Holy Communion.
- 4.4 The priests (and if present, the deacon) would consume the Eucharist in the normal way but would *not* immediately proceed to distribute Communion to the servers or the faithful. Rather, the newly-consecrated hosts would be briefly placed in the tabernacle awaiting the conclusion of the Mass.
- 4.5 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.
- 4.6 A small table should be placed at each communion station, with an unfolded corporal and a bottle of hand sanitizer (he may also have an ablution cup along with the hand sanitizer).
- 4.7 The priest (and any other ministers distributing Holy Communion) should use hand sanitizer immediately before approaching the tabernacle. They should also put on a surgical mask or cloth face covering. If a priest who has celebrated Mass is in a higher-risk group, a different priest or extraordinary minister of Holy Communion, might distribute in his place. In this case all precautions would apply to them too.
- 4.8 The priest, vested in alb and stole, retrieves the newly consecrated hosts from the tabernacle and returns to the altar. 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.*”
- 4.9 The priest (and other ministers, if present) proceed to the place prepared for the distribution of communion, distributing communion in the following way:
- The priest grasps the edge of the host,
 - Touches the opposite edge of the host to the hand of the person
 - And releases it in the usual way avoiding skin to skin contact.
- 4.10 The faithful should remove any face coverings right before they receive Communion.
- 4.11 Receiving communion in the hand is strongly encouraged out of Christian charity and concern for the safety and sensibilities of our brothers and sisters who may themselves be vulnerable; related to those who are vulnerable, or may have contact with vulnerable populations. For those wishing to receive communion on the tongue, the priest may invite them to wait until everyone who has received in the hand has come forward and then give to those wishing to receive on the tongue, sanitizing his hands after each person.

4.12 If the priest senses that his fingers have made contact with a person's hands or mouth, he should pause, place the ciborium on the corporal, and use the hand sanitizer. (He may also arrange for an ablution cup to be on the table and may purify his fingers in the ablution cup before using hand sanitizer.) 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 use hand sanitizer between each communicant, unless he makes actual contact.