

Archdiocese of St. Louis



Guidelines for Observing Social Distancing and other Health Requirements for the Celebration of Mass

The Bishops of Missouri establish the following common practices in the celebration of Mass to fulfill the requirements of social distancing during the COVID-19 pandemic, with other directives to be determined by the individual Diocesan Bishops.

Before Mass

1. All four Missouri Bishops have dispensed the faithful from the obligation to attend Mass on Sunday until further notice. The COVID-19 pandemic presents a serious threat to physical health. Therefore,
 - a. Those who are symptomatic or who have been exposed to another with the virus within 14 days are not permitted to enter the church, in accordance with national, state and local health directives. All attendees are asked to check their temperature at home before coming to church.
 - b. Those who are at risk because of an underlying health issue or who are over 60 are strongly encouraged, for their own health, to avoid the risk of attending public celebrations of the Mass.
 - c. We highly encourage parishes to livestream Mass, including on a daily basis, so that those unable to attend in person may maintain a spiritual connection with their local church.
 - d. Masses may be held in the church, large gymnasiums or on the parking lot. Metal chairs must be placed ahead of time to provide for social distancing. Cars must also be spaced appropriately.
 - e. Provide signage inside and outside of church outlining the Social Distancing Requirements**, limitations on crowd size, and procedures to limit crowd size.
2. To estimate an occupancy limit for your church, determine both the square footage of your worship space and your church's authorized fire or building code maximum occupancy.
 - a. For churches of less than 10,000 sq. ft., limit the number of all those present at each Mass to 25% or less of the fire or building code maximum occupancy.
 - b. For churches of 10,000 or more sq. ft., limit the number of all those present at each Mass to 10% or less of the fire or building code maximum occupancy.
3. Appropriate cleaning of high-use areas within the church is to be done before and after each service. This includes the body of the church, restrooms and sacristy. (While supplies last,

cleaning products are available from the Archdiocese, and paid for by the Annual Catholic Appeal.)

- a. The pews utilized by the assembly shall be wiped down with disinfectant.
 - b. All hymnals and missalettes are to be removed from the pews and stored for the duration of the pandemic. Cantors should select music, hymns that are familiar to most people so that they can actively participate in the Mass. No other materials may be left in the pews. The faithful are encouraged to bring their own missal for use during the celebration of Mass.
 - c. Door handles, push plates, and knobs are to be sanitized after each service.
4. Holy water fonts are to remain empty until further notice.
 5. Hand sanitizer is to be made available throughout the church, whenever possible.
 6. The faithful are obliged to wear a mask upon entering the church and during the celebration of Mass, except when seated in the pew and for the brief moment of receiving Holy Communion. Ushers and other volunteers are to wear masks and gloves (when gloves are not available, frequent handwashing will be necessary) throughout the celebration of Mass. Pastors are to see to it that these obligations are enforced without exception. CDC guidelines state that children under two or anyone unable to remove their own mask should not wear them.
 7. Clergy and other ministers are to maintain six-foot distancing and should not greet parishioners as they enter the church.
 8. There may be some pastors and parishes due to pre-existing conditions or local “hot spots” who are unable to open at this time.

During Mass

1. Entry and exit doors are to be adequately designated and monitored. Entry doors are to be propped or held open before Mass, and exit doors are to be propped or held open at the end of Mass to prevent people from touching the door handles, knobs or push plates.
2. Staff, ushers or other volunteers should assist with directing people to pews.
3. Families are to maintain six-foot distancing between their family and other families or individuals throughout the celebration of Mass.
 - a. Seating is to be arranged such that six feet of distance can be maintained between members of one household and members of another.
 - b. One or two pews are to be left vacant in between congregants such that six feet of distance can be maintained in all directions.
 - c. Cantors are to maintain six-foot social distancing.
4. Offertory processions are suspended as well as the sign of peace. Collection baskets (or any other materials) are not to be passed from one family to another, nor shall ushers take up the collection from the congregation. Stationary baskets are to be used for donations from the assembly and are to be monitored by the ushers until the donations are collected and handled according to the proper protocols in place for handling the collection.
5. Concelebrated Masses: The main celebrant is to receive the Precious Blood from his own chalice and consume it. The concelebrants are to receive the Precious Blood by intinction, with the last concelebrant consuming all that remains in the separate chalice.
6. For the distribution of Holy Communion, ushers or other volunteers who are masked and gloved will ensure six-foot distancing in the Communion line. Floor markings shall be placed six feet apart in the aisles in which the congregation approaches the sanctuary for Communion to facilitate proper social distancing.

7. Communion ministers must be masked, must sanitize their hands immediately before and after distributing Communion, and when at all possible, should utilize a disinfectant wipe or purificator dipped in a sanitizing solution (at least 60% ethanol or 70% isopropyl alcohol) to sanitize their fingers when incidental contact is made with the communicant.
8. Distribution of Holy Communion from the chalice is prohibited to the assembly. For those who suffer from celiac disease, special arrangements are to be made with the pastor.
9. Maintaining a single-file is necessary for the distribution of Holy Communion for each Communion minister and communicant to maintain social distancing. Multiple Communion ministers may be used as long as one-way traffic patterns are observed.
10. Communicants are to receive the Host in the hand, in keeping with the advice of state health officials and thereby to avoid the Communion minister's fingers coming into contact with saliva or particles exhaled from the communicants' mouth onto the ministers' fingers.
11. When approaching the Communion minister, the communicant is to pull their mask below their chin in order to prepare to receive Communion as above. The communicant immediately replaces their mask after consuming the Host.

After Mass

1. Family units should depart the church in an organized manner wearing masks and observing six feet of distance between other households.
2. Ushers are not to hand out bulletins or other materials
3. Clergy and other ministers are not to greet parishioners as they exit the church.
4. There are to be no receptions or social gatherings (e.g., coffee and doughnuts) following Mass.
5. Pews and other high traffic areas of the church are to be wiped down before the next service, with the removal of trash and other items from the pews. (This could mean that Mass schedules are adjusted or locations staggered to allow for time to sanitize the church.)

**Social Distancing Requirements means, to the extent possible, maintaining at least six-foot distancing from other individuals; washing hands with soap and water for at least twenty seconds as frequently as possible or using hand sanitizer with more than 60 percent alcohol; covering coughs and sneezes with something other than hands; and not shaking hands.

Archdiocese of St. Louis



Restart of Public Masses - Frequently Asked Questions

As we continue our efforts to protect one another from the serious effects of the coronavirus, these FAQs are offered to assist the faithful in understanding the instructions promulgated by Archbishop Robert J. Carlson. All official information is available on our website. Please continue to refer to archstl.org/coronavirus for the latest updates—including a condensed version of all directives for parishes—from the Archdiocese of St. Louis regarding COVID-19.

When can we go back to Mass like normal in our parish?

Public Masses, with appropriate social distancing for many parishes in the Archdiocese of St. Louis are set to resume on Monday, May 18, 2020. This date was chosen after discussion with government, health care professionals, and others.

But it will take time for things to “get back to normal.”

Important safety measures will be required in order to help protect congregants from infection and slow the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

What should we expect when we come to Mass at our parish?

First, anyone who is ill, symptomatic, or has been exposed to someone else with the coronavirus within 14 days cannot enter the church. This is in accord with national, state, and local health directives. We also ask everyone to check their temperature at home before deciding if you are coming to Mass. You can find the current symptoms of the coronavirus at the Center for Disease Control and Prevention’s website www.cdc.gov.

Archbishop Carlson has instructed parishes to ensure all pews are wiped down with disinfectant; that all hymnals and missalettes are removed; and that all surfaces used frequently (restroom facilities, door handles, etc.) are sanitized before each service.

Everyone attending Mass is obligated to wear a mask or other facial covering. The only exception during Mass is when we are seated in the pew and when receiving Holy Communion.

You’ll be asked to observe social distancing – staying at least six feet from people not in your household.

You’ll find the holy water fonts are empty and that there is hand sanitizer available.

When you arrive at church, please follow the instructions provided regarding which doors to use to enter and leave, where to sit, and the six-foot distance to maintain when you receive Holy Communion. Be sure to keep at least six feet between your family and others while in the pews.

Some parishes may have to limit attendance to assure compliance with public safety guidelines.

You'll notice there will be no offertory procession, no sign of peace, and no passing of the collection basket. You can drop your donation in a stationary basket, or continue to use the online or ACH opportunities provided by your parish.

Can we receive Holy Communion?

Yes, but only the Most Precious Body and only by hand. This is in keeping with the advice of state health officials to avoid any possible contact with another person's saliva or particles exhaled from the communicants' mouth onto the ministers' fingers.

For the distribution of Holy Communion, ushers or other volunteers who are masked and gloved will ensure six-foot distancing in the Communion line. Floor markings shall be placed six feet apart in the aisles in which the congregation approaches the sanctuary for Holy Communion to facilitate proper social distancing.

Communion ministers must be masked, sanitize their hands immediately before and after distributing Holy Communion, and when at all possible, should utilize a disinfectant wipe or purificator dipped in a sanitizing solution (at least 60% ethanol or 70% isopropyl alcohol) to sanitize their fingers when incidental contact is made with the communicant.

When approaching the Communion minister, the communicant is to pull their mask or other facial covering below their chin and present one hand resting on the palm of the other. After responding "Amen," the communicant reverently places the Eucharist in his or her mouth and immediately replaces their mask or other facial covering.

And what about coffee and donuts after Mass?

Please leave Mass together as a household, wearing your masks or other facial covering and observing six feet of distance from others. Your pastor and others will not be able to greet you after Mass, and bulletins or other materials should not be distributed after Mass. And no receptions or social gathering following Mass can be held.

I'm in the choir or a lector. What should we do?

Choirs are not allowed to assemble; cantors are acceptable to lead music at mass.

Lectors and all lay ministers are obligated to wear masks and maintain the social distance of six feet as much as possible.

When should children wear masks?

Parents should determine when a child is old enough to attend Mass and can abide by the safety guidelines.

What about other celebrations, such as first Communions, Confirmations, weddings, funerals, etc.?

Your pastor, parochial administrator, or parish life coordinator has been given authority to schedule these -- unless the local authorities are restricting public worship services – in keeping with the requirements of public safety.

It's just not possible for me to come to Mass. What can I do?

Archbishop Carlson has dispensed all of the faithful from the obligation of Sunday Mass until further notice. Parishes are being encouraged to continue livestreaming Masses, including daily Mass, to allow parishioners to maintain a spiritual connection with their local church.

Can we resume other meetings? Your pastor, parochial administrator, or parish life coordinator has been given authority to allow meetings, as long as the requirements of six-foot social distancing and the wearing of masks or other facial coverings and gloves (or frequent handwashing) can be observed. Conferencing by telephone or Internet is another option being used by many parishes.

Can we plan for social gatherings?

Social gatherings will be allowed as soon as possible. Currently social gatherings are still forbidden to help ensure the health and safety of all parishioners.

What about our employees and regular volunteers who are staffing our parishes and programs?

The Center for Disease Control offers these general guidelines for us to keep ourselves and each other healthy:

- If you feel sick, you should stay home.
- Continue to practice good hygiene, including:
 - Washing hands with soap and water, or using hand sanitizer.
 - Avoid touching your face.
 - Sneezing or coughing into a tissue or the inside of your elbow.
- Avoid socializing in groups that do not allow for appropriate social distancing.
- Minimize travel to the extent possible.



Guidelines for Observing Social Distancing and other Health Requirements for the Celebration of Mass

GENERAL GUIDELINES/REMINDERS

- **Dispensation of the obligation to attend Sunday Mass continues until further notice.**
- **Parishioners who are symptomatic or who have been exposed to another with the virus should not come to church, in accordance with national, state and local health directives.**
 - Attendees should take their temperature at home before determining whether they should attend Mass.
- Anyone over 60 years-old and those with underlying health complications are encouraged to participate in Masses *via live-stream only*.

CLEANING, SANITIZING AND HYGIENE

- Appropriate cleaning of high-use areas within the church is completed before and after each service.

CAPACITY/ATTENDANCE

- Gathering of congregants where Mass is celebrated is *limited to* the following:
 - For churches of less than 10,000 sq. ft., the number of all those present at each Mass is limited to 25% or less of the fire or building code maximum occupancy.
 - For churches of 10,000 or more sq. ft., the number of all those present at each Mass is limited to 10% or less of the fire or building code maximum occupancy.

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)

- The faithful are obliged to wear a mask during the celebration of Mass, except for the brief moment of receiving Communion.
- Ushers and other volunteers will wear masks and gloves (when gloves are not available, frequent handwashing will be necessary) throughout the celebration of Mass.
- Specific PPE practices are required for Eucharistic ministers. More details are included under “Holy Communion” below.

OFFERTORY

- **Stationary baskets** will be used for donations from the assembly and are to be monitored by the ushers until the donations are collected
- Collection baskets should not be passed, nor will ushers take up the collection from the congregation.
- **Please consider giving your offertory online.**

SIGN OF PEACE IS SUSPENDED



Guidelines for Observing Social Distancing and other Health Requirements for Holy Communion

HOLY COMMUNION

- **Communicants are to receive the Host in the hand** in keeping with the advice of state health officials and thereby to avoid the Communion minister's fingers coming into contact with saliva or particles exhaled from the communicants' mouth onto the ministers' fingers.
- **Communion ministers must be masked**, must sanitize their hands immediately before and after distributing Communion, and when at all possible, should utilize a disinfectant wipe or purificator dipped in a sanitizing solution (at least 60% ethanol or 70% isopropyl alcohol) to sanitize their fingers when incidental contact is made with the communicant.
- Distribution of **Holy Communion from the chalice is prohibited** to the assembly. For those who suffer from celiac disease, special arrangements are to be made with the pastor.
- When approaching the Communion minister, the communicant is to pull their mask below their chin in order to prepare to receive Communion as above. The communicant immediately replaces their mask after consuming the Host.
- Ushers or other volunteers who are masked and gloved will ensure six-foot distancing in the Communion line.
- Floor markings shall be placed six feet apart in the aisles in which the congregation approaches the sanctuary for Communion to facilitate proper social distancing.
- Maintaining a single-file is necessary for the distribution of Holy Communion for each Communion minister and communicant to maintain social distancing. Multiple Communion ministers may be used as long as one-way traffic patterns are observed.