

# **Liturgical Guidelines for Masses Celebrated during the Reopening of Masses with a Congregation**

## ***Preamble***

These Liturgical Guidelines are intended to assist priests and faithful in their reverent and joyful celebration of Holy Mass, while maintaining the health and safety precautions counseled by the provincial health authority. Neither the priest nor his parishioners are immune from the COVID-19 virus while celebrating the Eucharist. It is by carefully observing the directives and precautions outlined in this document that the reopening of public Masses can prudently take place, so that we can return safely to the celebration of the Eucharistic Sacrifice.

Respect for directives outlined in the Guidelines for the Reopening of Masses with a Congregation is presumed.

## **I. General Principles**

1. Because time spent in proximity to other persons increases the risk of transmission of COVID-19, priests should consider using the legitimate options given in the Roman Missal to shorten the length of Mass.
2. Sunday Mass can only be offered beginning at 4 pm on Saturday through Midnight on Sunday. A weekday Mass may not be celebrated or presented as replacing the Sunday Liturgy.
3. Considerations to bear in mind for shortening Mass: announcements can be eliminated or kept brief; the celebrant can enter from the sacristy rather than in a procession; if a cantor is used, sing only one verse of a song; use a shorter Penitential Act; prefer the shorter version of readings when an option is available; preach a brief homily; limit the number of the general intercessions; exit directly to the sacristy; purify the sacred vessels after Mass.
4. The Liturgy of the Word with Children should not be offered until further notice.

## **II. Preparation before Mass**

1. The priest and all ministers present in the sacristy should wash their hands thoroughly before Mass begins.

2. If the priest greets his parishioners before Mass, he must observe physical distancing and should consider wearing a mask or face covering.
3. For the presidential prayers, place the Roman Missal on the altar or on a stand at the chair to avoid having a server or deacon hold it.

### ***Wearing Masks and Gloves***

4. The priest celebrant and other ministers must ***not*** wear masks or gloves during the celebration of Holy Mass. Moreover, during the entire celebration, they should remain at least two metres distant from one another and the congregation, except during Communion, which is described below.

## **III. Celebration of Mass**

### ***Music***

1. While music is integral to the Sacred Liturgy, as we return to Mass in limited numbers, congregational singing should be kept to a minimum.
2. Health experts indicate that singing produces 6-10x more droplets from our mouths than recitation.
3. Because many of the faithful will be wearing masks, singing on the part of the assembly would probably be ineffective.
4. If a choir is present, it should be kept as small as possible, with each member spaced at least two metres apart. In many cases, a single cantor might suffice. The number of choir members is counted toward the 50-person maximum allowed in the church at any one time.
5. When worship aids for singing are produced, use them for only one Mass and then dispose of them, in order to avoid any possible contamination.
6. If the choir sings from a loft, it must be included in the cleaning and disinfecting procedures after Mass. Musicians should be responsible for cleaning organ/piano keys in the safest way possible for the instrument.

### ***Introductory Rites***

7. If there is an Entrance Procession, the priest and all ministers should be single file and keep two metres apart from one another and from anyone sitting in the pews.
8. The priest and deacon, if present, approach the altar and venerate it with a profound bow, not touching it at all.

### ***Liturgy of the Word***

9. When the faithful make the Sign of the Cross at the beginning of the Gospel, they should avoid touching their lips.
10. At the conclusion of the Gospel, the Book of the Gospels should be revered but not directly “kissed” by the celebrant.

### ***Liturgy of the Eucharist***

11. The Offertory Procession is to be omitted.
12. The wine and the water, the bowl and the towel are placed on the altar to the right of the priest. At the Offertory the priest or deacon pours the wine and water into the chalice(s) without the help of a server.
13. The hosts to be consecrated for the faithful should be placed in a covered ciborium on a second corporal towards the side of the altar. This allows the celebrant to say the words of Consecration directly over the host he will consume, with the other hosts not directly in front of him as he offers the Eucharistic Prayer. Any additional chalice should likewise be placed on the second corporal, with a purificator for each chalice.
14. The lavabo should be done by the priest alone, without assistance, at the side of the altar itself.
15. The Sign of Peace is to be omitted.
16. At the Doxology, the priest alone elevates the chalice and paten.

### ***Communion of the Priest(s) and Deacon***

17. Only the principal celebrant should drink from the main chalice.
18. When there is one or more concelebrants or a deacon, then each one receives the Precious Blood from his own chalice. The principal celebrant gives the Host to the deacon in the usual way. Each priest and deacon purifies his own chalice.

## **IV. Holy Communion of the Faithful**

1. Before Mass, and again at the time of Communion, the priest should explain when and how Communion will be distributed to the faithful. Instruction should include the requirement to remove their mask or face coverings and, unless underlying concerns suggest otherwise, to remove gloves as well. Gloves should be left in the place occupied in the pew. At the end of Mass, they must deposit the gloves in a container for that purpose.

2. Reception of the Precious Blood by the faithful is suspended at this time; nor should they receive by intinction.
3. For celiacs, a separate small chalice can be prepared and placed on the second corporal. The amount of wine used must be small enough for the communicant to drink it entirely.
4. Communion should ordinarily be distributed by the priest(s) and deacon; it must never be “self-administered.” When necessary, Extraordinary Ministers of Communion should be trained regarding the special procedures to be used during this phase of reopening.
5. If a priest has underlying health conditions (although not sick) or is otherwise unable, he should have an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion distribute in his place.
6. The faithful have the right to receive Communion in the hand or on the tongue.<sup>1</sup>
7. Receiving Communion on the tongue could cause concern for some ministers and for parishioners who are following in line; some are afraid that droplets are spread to the minister and then to them in this way. To address this fear the priest might ask those receiving on the tongue to receive last or he might designate a specific minister for them. Moreover, it is recommended that the minister purify his fingers and use hand sanitizer after each person who receives on the tongue.
8. Regardless of the manner of distribution, the priest or minister is to wash or sanitize his hands immediately before distributing Communion.
9. The priest or minister must not wear gloves for distributing Communion, but he should wear a mask or face covering when he distributes Communion after Mass.
10. A small table should be placed at each Communion station, with an unfolded corporal, purificator, ablution cup and hand sanitizer. An ablution cup and hand sanitizer should also be placed at the Tabernacle.

### ***Reception of Holy Communion within Mass***

11. In coming forward to receive Communion, physical distancing in single file must be maintained in the procession, though members of the same household need not do so.
12. As far as possible, all aisles should be only for one-way traffic.
13. It is recommended that the dialogue between the minister and the communicant take place with two metres separating them. The communicant bows to the minister, who

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<sup>1</sup> See [Statement of the Thomistic Institute](#).

says, “The Body of Christ,” to which the response “Amen” is given. The communicant then steps forward to receive Communion in the usual way.

14. The minister should take special care not to touch the faithful in any way (hand, tongue, etc.). If the minister senses that his fingers have touched the communicant or that the communicant’s hands have touched him, he should pause, place the ciborium on the corporal, purify his fingers in the ablution cup and then use hand sanitizer. The ablution cup should be cleansed after each Mass. The minister should repeat this process as often as he judges necessary during the distribution of Communion. It is *not* necessary, however, for the minister to use the ablution cup and hand sanitizer between each communicant, unless he makes actual physical contact.

### ***Reception of Holy Communion after Mass***

15. It is permissible that the distribution of Communion take place at the conclusion of Mass. This practice allows for easier observance of health and safety precautions, such as wearing a mask or face covering. It also permits the priest to remove his chasuble for the distribution of Communion, given that it is difficult to launder if anyone should sneeze or cough on him.
16. After the Final Blessing and the Dismissal in the usual way, the priest and deacon (if present) remain in the sanctuary.
17. At the chair, the priest removes his chasuble and the deacon removes his dalmatic.
18. Vested in alb and stole, the priest should use hand sanitizer immediately before approaching the Tabernacle. He may also don his own mask or face covering, while reminding the communicants to remove theirs.
19. Upon returning to the altar, the priest holds up a single Host, and 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.”
20. The priest, and other ministers, if present, proceed to the place prepared for distribution of Communion.
21. In coming forward to receive Communion, physical distancing in single file must be maintained in the procession, though members of the same household need not do so.
22. It is recommended that the dialogue between the minister and the communicant take place with two metres separating them. The communicant bows to the minister, who

says, “The Body of Christ,” to which the response “Amen” is given. The communicant then steps forward to receive Communion in the usual way.

23. The minister should take special care not to touch the faithful in any way (hand, tongue, etc.). If the minister senses that his fingers have touched the communicant or that the communicant’s hands have touched him, he should pause, place the ciborium on the corporal, purify his fingers in the ablution cup and then use hand sanitizer. A purificator should also be available. The ablution cup should be cleansed after each Mass.
24. After distributing Communion, the priest returns the remaining Hosts to the Tabernacle, sanitizes his hands, and returns to the sacristy.
25. After receiving Communion and after a suitable time of personal prayer, the faithful depart on their own, while observing physical distancing.

## **V. Dismissal and Recessional**

1. After the Dismissal, the ministers recess in single file, and the faithful depart maintaining a two-metre physical distance.
2. If the priest greets people following Mass, he must observe physical distancing and should consider wearing a mask.
3. All vessels are to be thoroughly purified and cleaned with soap and hot water.

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Archbishop of Vancouver

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