

Diocese of San Angelo
Phase One Protocols for Public Liturgies
Version 2.0
May 7, 2020

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. On Monday, April 27, 2020, Governor Greg Abbott issued *Executive Order GA 18* relating to the reopening of some activities in Texas. On that same date, the Office of the Attorney General in Texas updated its *Guidance for Houses of Worship During the COVID-19 Crisis*. In light of those developments, the following protocols are issued for the Catholic Church in the Diocese of San Angelo.
- B. Effective May 1, 2020, the prior diocesan guidance regarding the liturgical and sacramental life of the Church during the coronavirus crisis are replaced by these Phase One Protocols.
- C. At this time, we are asked to conduct as many activities as possible remotely. When we do gather together in person for the liturgy, we must follow the health protocols listed in the document *Guidance for Houses of Worship During the COVID-19 Crisis*.

D. Opening of Church Buildings

When possible, churches should be kept open every day for a certain amount of time, and the parishioners should be informed of those hours, so they may enter for individual prayer. Social distancing must be practiced by those who enter.

E. Sanitizing

Holy water should be removed from fonts at this time.

Hymn books and other resources must be removed from the pews and sanitized during this time period, and they will not be returned until the coronavirus outbreak has passed.

Surfaces in church buildings are to be regularly sanitized.

F. Sunday Obligation

Until further notice, Catholics in the Diocese of San Angelo continue to be dispensed from the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays.

Those who do not receive Communion are encouraged to make an Act of Spiritual Communion. A text for this prayer is available at www.sanangelodiocese.org.

G. Those who are sick:

We care for the Body of Christ by first taking care of our own body. The obligation to participate in Mass is not required for those who are sick. A person who is sick should not worsen their illness by trying to get to church, and they should not put others at risk of catching their illness. It is not sinful to miss Mass if one is sick; it is actually an expression of care for the health of others.

For those who are seriously ill, the Church wants to celebrate with them the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick. This can be arranged by contacting the parish office. If one has symptoms of the coronavirus, they should seek medical attention.

H. Preparing to Return to Public Mass:

In the Diocese of San Angelo, the return to the public celebration of Mass with distribution of Holy Communion must be done in a way that is safe, gradual, and ordered. It will be carried out in phases. This will require careful preparation, good communication, and patience. Parishes are encouraged to form a pandemic response team to work on the many tasks of planning and preparing for the implementation of these protocols. Throughout this process, we must take into account both the physical and spiritual welfare of our people.

Not all parishes will necessarily begin public Masses on the same date.

Before a particular parish or mission moves to the next phase in the process of reopening, the pastor must assure that the required safety training and supplies are all in place. Because some of those supplies are difficult to obtain, all should be patient for the sake of public safety.

In any given parish or area, if a new flareup of the coronavirus occurs after the parish has moved to public Masses in the church, then the parish should move back to a more restrictive phase for the sake of public health, such as celebrating non-public livestreamed Masses or Parking Lot Masses.

II. PHASE ONE GUIDELINES FOR THE MASS

A. Before moving to Phase One:

Before beginning Phase One, a parish celebrates non-public Masses without a congregation, in order to protect public health. In this situation, it is recommended that the parish Mass be made available to the parishioners through remote transmission, such as livestreaming, Internet, pre-recording, television, or radio.

Those who are unable to receive Communion are urged to make an Act of Spiritual Communion.

B. Moving to Phase One:

When all the necessary preparations have been made, a pastor may request permission from the bishop utilizing the appropriate version of the form “Permission to Begin Phase One of Reopening Liturgies to the Public.” A separate form should be used for each particular parish and mission. Only after the pastor receives this form signed by the bishop may that parish or mission proceed to Phase One.

C. Phase One Options for Mass:

When a parish has been given permission by the bishop to move to Phase One, the pastor has the option of using any of the following approaches, or a combination of them:

- Remote Transmission of Mass
- Parking Lot Mass
- Distribution of Holy Communion Outside of Mass
- Reduced-Crowd Indoor Public Mass

The following pages explain these four options in detail.

1. Remote Transmission of Mass:

Whether a parish is offering public Mass or not, they are encouraged to make Sunday Mass available remotely, through livestreaming, Internet, pre-recording, television, or radio, in English and Spanish, according to the language of the people.

The use of social media and remote transmission of Masses to parishioners helps them to be more aware of developments in the life of the parish community, and to stay connected to the Church.

Practical Considerations for the Remote Transmission of Mass:

a. Platforms

There are many platforms to consider, including Facebook, Vimeo, YouTube, Twitch, etc. Sometimes, the company that hosts the parish website offers livestreaming as an option to its customers.

b. Livestreaming Advisory

Please keep in mind that there are those who might not want their images to appear in the media. For this reason, when you are livestreaming Mass, please keep the camera focused only on the altar and ambo, rather than filming the assembly.

Two occasions that could be problematic could be weddings and funerals. Video of the couple coming down the aisle and leaving after the wedding ceremony, and video of the priest receiving the body at the beginning of a funeral is likely to show video footage of some attendees in the church.

To avoid issues or complaints that may be associated with these liturgies, please post the following signage at the entrance to the church whenever a liturgy is being transmitted or recorded.

This Mass is being recorded for those who are not able to attend in person. Please be aware that by attending this liturgy you acknowledge and consent that you may be recorded during this event.

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Esta Misa se está grabando para aquellos que no pueden asistir en persona. Tenga en cuenta que al asistir a esta liturgia usted reconoce y acepta que puede ser registrado durante este evento.

c. Livestreaming Music

It is imperative that you have the necessary copyright license to livestream/post your Mass/Liturgy. If your parish already has a license for your weekly Masses, it may not include the "Livestream" add on - please review your licensing agreement. If your parish does not already have a license, some options are:

- 1) Purchase the License – One License Music (or other source)

When livestreaming and/or posting a pre-recorded Mass/Liturgy that includes music, the license number must appear either on your video or in the description. The podcast / stream must include the following words at the end of the service, in the video description, or on the website containing a link to the podcast / live stream:

"Permission to podcast / stream the music in this service obtained from ONE LICENSE with license #A-000000 (insert parish license number). All rights reserved."

For a list of questions and answers on using music in livestreaming and licensing, visit <https://onelicense.net/how-it-works#podcast> General licensing information can be found by visiting <https://onelicense.net/faqs>

2) Use only hymns that are in the public domain. A list of public domain English hymns can be found at <https://musicasacra.com/music/english-hymns-in-the-commons/>

3) Mute the hymns when the liturgy is made public.

d. Livestreaming Liturgical Texts

1) Copyright Permissions – Scripture, Liturgical Texts

The Confraternity of Christian Doctrine and the USCCB has extended the following permission to December 31, 2020:

“In light of the health precautions that may become necessary in the coming days and weeks, the USCCB, CCD, and ICEL are waiving any need to request permission to use readings or Mass prayers in a livestreamed liturgy. This applies to both English and Spanish readings and orations.”

2) Copyright Permissions – I.C.E.L Liturgical Texts

From the International Commission on English in the Liturgy (ICEL):

“No ICEL permission is required to stream or record liturgies. If you wish to put a transcription or guide alongside the recording, this is permitted (assuming the usual conditions about the text being reproduced correctly and the acknowledgement is placed somewhere appropriate) for the duration of the pandemic.” For the text of the usual acknowledgement, please visit <http://www.icelweb.org/copyright.htm>

2. Parking Lot Mass:

This option is made available by the bishop of the Diocese of San Angelo only because of the extraordinary circumstances of the current national health emergency. It is not to be used in non-emergency settings. It is not a universal practice in all dioceses.

The Diocesan Liturgical Commission presents these guidelines to pastors in order that these liturgies may be as safe and dignified as possible. If this type of Mass is considered, it requires careful and serious advance planning. It may not be done without the permission of the local pastor.

There is no expectation or obligation of the diocese that the Mass be offered in this manner.

Practical Considerations for the Parking Lot Mass:

- a. Pastors may choose to offer a Parking Lot Mass for Sunday Masses.
- b. The Parking Lot Mass format is discouraged for weekday Mass.
- c. Pastors should check with local governmental officials to ensure that such celebrations are in keeping with civil expectations.
- d. The local police department should be informed that the Parking Lot Masses will be taking place.
- e. The parish should make sure not to create a situation of blocking traffic on city streets.
- f. Parishes should anticipate the possibility of larger-than-usual crowds from people taking advantage of these opportunities.
- g. The Mass can be celebrated either on the altar of the church or on a portable altar situated outside for the majority of the people to see. If possible, the preferred setting is for the people in their vehicles to be able to see the priest at the altar. If the Mass is celebrated inside on the altar of the church, there should be a livestreaming option for people to view the liturgical action from their cars. FM transmitters or outdoor speaker systems are acceptable means of communication for this sort of Mass when the altar is outdoors and visible to the people.
- h. Even when Parking Lot Masses are offered, it is recommended that the remote transmission of Mass be made available for those who are not able to come, and for those in their vehicles to be able to participate actively.
- i. Volunteer parking attendants or professional security personnel should be on hand to direct the flow of traffic and maintain order. It might be necessary to have these helpers direct cars to parking spaces. The optimal parking arrangement for this Mass might or might not correspond to the markings on the pavement.
- j. As drivers are entering the parking lot, it would be beneficial that they be given a written copy of the instructions for parking, tuning in to the Mass, receiving Communion, safe social distancing in this context, and exiting safely.

- k. The people attending the Mass must observe social distancing guidelines by staying in their vehicles except to use the restroom or to receive Communion. This liturgy should not become a gathering of standing crowds of people, because that could lead to the transmission of disease.
- l. The Holy Eucharist may be distributed only by ordinary or extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion. Their demeanor during the distribution must be utterly dignified and respectful, not conversational. They are to wash their hands before and after the Mass.
- m. Parishes should take care to ensure that these experiences are not treated like “drive-through” options for Mass. The cars should be stationary in their parking spaces while Communion is being distributed. Moving cars in an open parking lot risk the physical safety of pedestrians. To promote safety for all, we recommend that physical barriers such as traffic cones or saw-horses be placed at the entrances to the parking lot at the beginning of Mass to prevent more vehicles from entering. These same barriers would be removed when appropriate so that the vehicles may exit safely.
- n. Regarding the Offertory Collection, the Liturgical Commission recommends that the collection be taken up in this way: a basket or box, accompanied by an usher, is placed about 6-10 feet away from the Communion station, so people may place donations there after receiving Communion.

It is also acceptable for a collection basket to be held by an usher near the exits of the parking lot.

Social distancing norms should be observed, and the security of monies should be discerned by the pastor and the organizers.

- o. The distribution of Communion may take place either at the normal time in the Mass or after the final blessing and the conclusion of the Mass. The pastor should choose whichever option is more suitable for his local context. Barriers at the exits in any given area should not be removed until the movement of pedestrians has ceased.
- p. Communion is distributed at Communion stations. If possible, these should provide shade from the sun. The Communion station should include a table with a corporal and hand sanitizer. This gives the minister the ability to sanitize his/her hands as needed, in case they accidentally touch someone.
- q. Communion ministers use a face mask or cloth face covering. They drop the host into the open hand of the communicant without touching their hand.

- r. If there is accidental touching of the minister's hand with the hand of the communicant, the minister should stop, set the ciborium on the corporal on the nearby table at the Communion station, sanitize the hands, then continue serving Communion to others.
- s. Communion stations may be located indoors or outdoors. Communion is not taken to individual vehicles. The communicants get out of their cars when directed by the ushers, observing social distancing.
- t. As a temporary measure due to the current pandemic, Communion is to be distributed in the hand only, not on the tongue. This is in service of the common good (canon 223).
- u. After the distribution of Communion, the ministers should return their ciboria as in a normal Mass.
- v. Health Protocols for clergy, staff, and volunteers in a Parking Lot Mass:
 - 1) All clergy, staff, and those volunteers assisting in these liturgies must be trained on appropriate cleaning and disinfection, hand hygiene, and respiratory etiquette.
 - 2) All clergy, staff, and those volunteers assisting in these liturgies are to be screened when they arrive to serve. Their temperature is to be checked with the use of a medical-grade non-contact infrared thermometer.

They are to be sent home if they have any of the following new or worsening signs or symptoms of possible COVID-19:

- Cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, chills, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, loss of taste, loss of smell, diarrhea, feeling feverish, having a measured temperature greater than or equal to 100.0 degrees Fahrenheit, or known close contact with a person who is lab confirmed to have COVID-19.
 - They are not to be allowed to return until they have met the criteria in the health protocols of the April 27, 2020, document from the office of the Attorney General entitled *Guidance for Houses of Worship During the COVID-19 Crisis*.
- 3) Clergy, staff, and volunteers are to wash or sanitize their hands when they arrive to serve.

- 4) Those who set things up for Mass (sacristans) are expected to wear gloves when setting things up and putting things away.
- 5) The priest celebrant must wear a face mask or cloth face covering when he is distributing Communion. During the other parts of the Mass, his use of a face mask or cloth face covering is optional. If he does not use a mask in some parts of the Mass, he must remain more than 6 feet from the congregation.

If the priest celebrant does not wear a face mask or cloth face covering throughout the entire Mass, the following measures are recommended. The Missal can be placed on a stand at the chair or even on the altar when he recites the presidential prayers, rather than having a server hold the book near him. The lavabo should be done by the priest alone, without assistance, either at a credence table or at the side of the altar itself. For the consecration, the ciboria of hosts for the people should be placed on a corporal on the far edge of the altar *mensa*, not directly in front of the priest as he speaks the Eucharistic prayer.

- 6) All other clergy, staff, and volunteers are to wear face masks or cloth face coverings (over the nose and mouth) during the Mass. This includes concelebrants, deacons, readers as they proclaim the readings, choirs as they sing or play musical instruments, ushers, altar servers, and Communion ministers as they distribute Communion.
- 7) The wearing of a clear face shield by those distributing Communion is optional.
- 8) For the faithful who are attending a Parking Lot Mass but not exercising any particular ministry in the Mass, the use of a face mask or cloth face covering is optional.
- 9) An adequate supply of face masks or cloth face coverings should be made available for all clergy, staff, and volunteers who do not have their own.
- 10) Clergy, staff, and volunteers are to maintain at least six feet of separation from other individuals. If such distancing is not feasible, then other measures are to be rigorously practiced, including face masks or cloth face coverings, hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, cleanliness, and sanitation.
- 11) Those who do not meet the criteria of these health protocols are not allowed to serve in that Mass.

- w. Those who are age 65 or older, those of any age with serious underlying medical conditions, and those who are sick, should stay home and watch a livestream Mass.
- x. It is recommended that those age 65 or older, or who have serious underlying medical conditions, or who are sick, not be used in roles of liturgical ministry (ushers, readers, choir members, or extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion) at this time, in order to protect them from risk of contagion. However, the pastor may allow them to serve in case of serious pastoral need.
- y. It is recommended that priests and deacons who are age 65 or older, or who have serious underlying medical conditions, or who are sick, leave the distribution of Communion to others at this time in the pandemic. However, the pastor may allow them to serve in case of serious pastoral need.

3. Distribution of Holy Communion Outside of Mass:

- a. In the current circumstances, it is acceptable for the parish to offer a livestreamed Mass, then distribute Communion, either inside or outside, after the conclusion of the livestreamed Mass. However, when Communion is distributed outdoors, it should not be distributed to people in their vehicles. They should get out of their vehicles and approach a Communion station.
 - 1) Communion is distributed at Communion stations. If possible, these should provide shade from the sun. The Communion station should include a table with a corporal and hand sanitizer. This gives the minister the ability to sanitize his/her hands as needed, in case they accidentally touch someone.
 - 2) Communion ministers use a face mask or cloth face covering. They drop the host into the open hand of the communicant without touching their hand.
 - 3) If there is accidental touching of the minister's hand, the minister should stop, set the ciborium on the corporal on the nearby table at the Communion station, sanitize the hands, then continue serving Communion to others.
 - 4) As a temporary measure due to the current pandemic, Communion is to be distributed in the hand only, not on the tongue. This is in service of the common good (canon 223).

- b. In the current circumstances, it is acceptable for parishioners to receive Holy Communion outside of Mass. All precautions of social distancing and sanitizing must be followed. Typically, the prayer would follow the form of nos. 26-41 in *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass*.
- c. It is acceptable during Phase One for deacons or extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion to lead the Liturgy of the Word with a Communion Service on weekdays and the Sunday Celebration in the Absence of a Priest on Sundays. This strategy may help to allow more parishioners to have access to the Eucharist during this pandemic time. Face masks or cloth face coverings should be worn by all and social distancing should be in effect.
- d. It is recommended that those age 65 or older, or who have serious underlying medical conditions, or who are sick, not be used in roles of liturgical ministry at this time, in order to protect them from risk of contagion. However, the pastor may allow them to serve in case of serious pastoral need.
- e. It is recommended that priests and deacons who are age 65 or older, or who have serious underlying medical conditions, or who are sick, leave the distribution of Communion to others at this time in the pandemic. However, the pastor may allow them to serve in case of serious pastoral need.

4. Reduced-Crowd Indoor Public Mass:

Practical considerations for the Reduced Crowd Indoor Public Mass:

- a. This may be used for Mass on any day of the week. It may also be used for special Masses, such as First Communion, Confirmation, RCIA Christian Initiation, Weddings, and Funerals.
- b. The following persons are strongly encouraged to stay home and participate remotely:
 - 1) those who are age 65 or older;
 - 2) those who have serious underlying medical conditions;
 - 3) those who are feeling sick or who have a cough of any sort;
 - 4) Even more urgently, anyone who has any reason to believe they might have been exposed to COVID-19 should remain at home.

- c. Alternatively, a separate Mass may be offered on Sunday or another day for the at-risk population only. Ideally, this would be the first Mass of the day. Those at-risk persons who are not able to come to the Church may contact the parish to request someone to bring them Communion at home.
- d. Proper spacing is required between attendees:
 - 1) Every other row must be left empty. The empty pews should be blocked off by something that does not damage the finish on the pews.
 - 2) There should be at least six feet of separation between parties in any row, except as follows:
 - Two or more members of the same household may sit next to one another in the same row, with six feet of separation on either side of the family group.
 - Two individuals who are not members of the same household but who are attending together may sit adjacent to one another, with six feet of separation on either side.
 - 3) These spacing requirements also apply to those in choirs and music groups.
 - 4) Some of our parishes have chosen to stagger the empty pews in order to achieve a bit more social distancing; that is, on the left side of the aisle pews 1, 3, and 5 are empty, and on the right side of the aisle pews 2, 4, and 6 are empty.
- e. The above spacing requirements will result in fewer people getting into the church for Mass. After all the available spaces are filled, additional people must not be admitted to the church building. Ushers must inform those who arrive after the church is full that they are not allowed to enter for this Mass, and they should explain to them the other options that may be available to them (such as listening to the remote broadcast from their car or home and receiving Communion after the Mass, or returning for another Mass or Communion service, or coming to a Weekday Mass during the week).
- f. Because such a small number of people can fit in the church with the current spacing requirements, it is strongly recommended that the remote transmission of the Mass be made available for those who are not able to come, and for those in their vehicles outside.

- g. Because fewer people will fit into the Mass, it is acceptable for a parish to celebrate Masses during Phase One in their larger buildings, such as the parish hall or gym, in order to accommodate more people.
- h. During Phase One, we recommend that some people consider sometimes attending Mass on a weekday rather than a weekend, in order to allow more room for others on Sundays.
- i. Face Masks for All:
- All attendees over the age of two are to wear face masks or cloth face coverings (over the nose and mouth). Surgical masks or N-95 respirators are not recommended by the Centers for Disease Control for this sort of use.
 - During Phase One, those over the age of two, whether children or adults, who are either unable or unwilling to be in Mass with a mask or face covering, have other options to consider, such as Parking Lot Mass, Distribution of Holy Communion Outside of Mass, or Remote Transmission of Mass.
 - All are encouraged to bring their own face mask or cloth face covering. An adequate supply of face masks or cloth face coverings should be made available for all clergy, staff, volunteers, or attendees who do not have their own.
 - The priest celebrant must wear a face mask or cloth face covering when he is distributing Communion. During the other parts of the Mass, his use of a face mask or cloth face covering is optional. If he does not use a mask in some parts of the Mass, he must remain more than 6 feet from the congregation. The Missal can be placed on a stand at the chair or even on the altar when he recites the presidential prayers, rather than having a server hold the book near him. The lavabo should be done by the priest alone, without assistance, either at a credence table or at the side of the altar itself. For the consecration, the ciboria of hosts for the people should be placed on a corporal on the far edge of the altar *mensa*, not directly in front of the priest as he speaks the Eucharistic prayer.
 - All other clergy, staff, and volunteers are to wear face masks or cloth face coverings (over the nose and mouth) during the Mass. This includes concelebrants, deacons, readers as they proclaim the readings, choirs as they sing or play musical instruments, ushers, altar servers, and Communion ministers as they distribute Communion.

- The wearing of a clear face shield by those distributing Communion is optional.

j. Health Protocols for clergy, staff, and volunteers:

- All clergy, staff, and those volunteers assisting in these liturgies must be trained on appropriate cleaning and disinfection, hand hygiene, and respiratory etiquette.
- All clergy, staff, and those volunteers assisting in these liturgies are to be screened before coming into the building. Their temperature is to be checked with the use of a medical-grade non-contact infrared thermometer. They are to be sent home if they have any of the following new or worsening signs or symptoms of possible COVID-19:

Cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, chills, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, loss of taste, loss of smell, diarrhea, feeling feverish, having a measured temperature greater than or equal to 100.0 degrees Fahrenheit, or known close contact with a person who is lab confirmed to have COVID-19.

- They are not to be allowed to return until they have met the criteria in the health protocols of the April 27, 2020, document from the office of the Attorney General entitled *Guidance for Houses of Worship During the COVID-19 Crisis*.
 - Clergy, staff, and volunteers are to wash or sanitize their hands upon entering the building.
 - Those who set things up for Mass (sacristans) are expected to wear gloves when setting things up and putting things away.
 - Clergy, staff, and volunteers are to maintain at least six feet of separation from other individuals. If such distancing is not feasible, then other measures are to be rigorously practiced, including face masks or cloth face coverings, hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, cleanliness, and sanitation.
- k. It is recommended that those age 65 or older, or who have serious underlying medical conditions, or who are sick, not be used in roles of liturgical ministry (ushers, readers, choir members, or extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion) at this time, in order to protect them from risk of contagion. However, the pastor may allow them to serve in case of serious pastoral need.

l. It is recommended that priests and deacons who are age 65 or older, or who have serious underlying medical conditions, or who are sick, leave the distribution of Communion to others at this time in the pandemic. However, the pastor may allow them to serve in case of serious pastoral need.

m. Health protocols for the facilities where Mass is held:

- Regularly and frequently clean and disinfect any regularly touched surfaces, such as pews, doorknobs, tables, chairs, and restrooms. The Centers for Disease Control website has very good information about cleaning and disinfecting.
- Disinfect pews or chairs between Masses. Be careful not to use cleaning or disinfecting products that damage the wood or the finish of the pews.
- Disinfect any items that come into contact with attendees.
- Those who do the cleaning and disinfecting should wear gloves.
- Make hand sanitizer, disinfecting wipes, soap and water, or similar disinfectant readily available. Encourage those entering or exiting to perform hand hygiene.
- Make hand sanitizer available to attendees near all entry points of the church building.
- Place readily available signage to remind everyone of the best hygiene practices, including at least the following items: hand washing, face covering, respiratory etiquette, refraining from shaking hands, and social distancing.
- If food is made available to people after Mass, it should be individually packed for each attendee.
- Maintain rigorous sanitation practices like disinfection, handwashing, and cleanliness when serving Communion.

n. Greeting people:

Those who greet people at the entrances of churches should refrain from physical contact, instead using smiles, eye contact, kind words, and waves.

Ushers may wear gloves.

o. Choirs:

Choir members and musicians are also required to follow the rules of social distancing. During Phase One, this may lead to smaller choirs or no choir at all. Choir members are expected to wear face masks or cloth face coverings throughout the Mass, including when they are singing or playing musical instruments.

Parishes should plan carefully regarding choirs, because germs and droplets expelled during singing can travel farther. Vigorous singing, especially in close proximity to others, may increase the risk of viral spread.

There should be no hymnals, missalettes, or paper worship aides in the pews during Phase One.

p. Holding hands:

In this particular time of public health concern over the coronavirus, we should refrain from holding hands during the Lord's Prayer.

q. Offertory Collection:

To minimize the risk of the transmission of the virus, collection baskets are not to be passed through the pews. There are two alternatives:

- 1) Boxes or other containers may be set up at central collection points where the faithful can place their contributions. These should be monitored for security reasons.
- 2) Long-handled collection baskets may be used by the ushers, but these must be sanitized after each use.

r. Offertory Procession:

This procession is to be omitted. Before Mass, the gifts of bread and wine should be placed on a credence table near the altar.

s. The Sign of Peace:

Whenever the sign of peace is exchanged, it should be done without any touch or shaking of hands.

Some gestures that might be used are a smile, eye contact, a simple bow of the head, or a wave.

t. Distribution of Holy Communion:

- Holy Communion may be distributed either at its regular place in the Mass or after the final blessing. This is a decision made by the pastor.
- All those distributing Communion, including clergy, must use a face mask or cloth face covering.
- The Precious Blood is not to be distributed to the faithful during this phase, nor should the faithful receive the Eucharist by intinction.
- As a temporary measure due to the current pandemic, Communion is to be distributed in the hand only, not on the tongue. This is in service of the common good (canon 223).
- All ministers of Holy Communion, both ordinary and extraordinary, should wash their hands with soap and water before and after Mass. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion use a sanitizing gel or antibacterial wipe just before they come to the sanctuary.
- After the priest consumes the Body and Blood of Christ, he sanitizes his hands, puts on his face mask or cloth face covering, and distributes the hosts to the people. After distributing Communion, he purifies his fingers and sanitizes his hands. He may then remove his face mask for the Prayer after Communion.
- Communion should be distributed in such a way that the minister's hand does not touch the hand of the communicant. The minister is to drop the host into the open hand of the communicant without touching their hand. If there is accidental touching of the minister's hand with the hand of the communicant, the minister should pause, sanitize their hands, then return and continue serving others.
- Gloves:

It is not required that those distributing Communion wear gloves. It was previously thought that gloves must be worn by those who serve Communion. However, experts in public health have informed us that glove usage is not superior to hand washing for the prevention of the spread of germs. Gloves absorb germs, they can lead to a false sense of cleanliness, they can attract particles, and they make it more difficult to notice when one's hand has

touched something. Ministers without gloves can be more aware of whether their clean hands are coming into contact with communicants' hands.

- Those receiving Communion continue to wear their face mask or face covering except at the time of receiving Communion. They remove their face mask or face covering before they receive the host in their hand. After receiving Communion, they put the mask back on. Social distancing (6 feet) must be maintained between communicants while waiting in line to receive Communion.

u. Conclusion of the Mass:

After the final blessing, people are to leave the church progressively, not all at once.

They may be dismissed by the ushers by rows. This will help maintain safe social distancing.

- v. After Mass, indoor or outdoor distribution of Holy Communion should be made available after the final blessing as needed for those who were not able to get into the building for the Mass. Communion is not to be taken to people in their vehicles or to be delivered in a drive-through method.
- Communion is distributed at Communion stations. If possible, these should provide shade from the sun. The Communion station should include a table with a corporal and hand sanitizer. This gives the minister the ability to sanitize his/her hands as needed, in case they accidentally touch someone.
 - Communion ministers use a face mask or cloth face covering. They drop the host into the open hand of the communicant without touching their hand.
 - If there is accidental touching of the minister's hand with the hand of the communicant, the minister should stop, set the ciborium on the corporal on the nearby table at the Communion station, sanitize the hands, then continue serving Communion to others.

III. SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

A. Individual Confession:

1. Priests are to make the Sacrament of Reconciliation available to their people, both at scheduled times and by appointment.

2. The priest must be physically present to the penitent in person, and he must be able to hear the penitent without the aid of electronic devices such as a wired phone, a mobile phone, an intercom, a walkie-talkie, or other audio or video transmitting devices. Of course, the priest or penitent may use a hearing aid to amplify natural sound.
3. In the present pandemic emergency, the individual celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation should not take place in the confined space of the confessional room.

In a small room, there is not enough air circulation to mitigate the risk of contamination by airborne pathogens.

Instead, individual Confession should take place in a larger, ventilated space indoors, or outdoors. For example, if the church is large, Confessions could take place in the body of the church, or perhaps in a gymnasium or parish hall.

4. To better protect against the transmission of disease, all Confessions should be anonymous and behind a protective screen. Health officials have advised us that we should put a cloth over the screen as extra protection against the transmission of germs. Penitents should be instructed, by a sign or by some other means, not to touch the screen. Priests and penitents may wear a protective face mask or cloth face covering.
5. Regarding the posture of the penitents for individual Confession, the most sanitary approach is for them to stand. If a chair is provided, it should be a chair without arms. If a kneeler is provided for the penitents, sanitizing wipes should be available to them, so that each person sanitizes the space at the end of their Confession.
6. In general, the penitent space, as well as any seating where people wait for their turn, should be frequently sanitized.
7. If there is any line, the people in line must be spaced at least 6 feet apart. A simple way to achieve this is to put physical marks on the ground or on the floor.
8. “Drive-through Confessions” are possible. Penitents may remain in their vehicles, as long as there is no one else in the vehicle with them. In a drive-through Confession, the priest should maintain at least a 6-foot distance from the car window.
9. As always, and in all cases, the sacredness of the sacramental seal must be safeguarded.

B. General Absolution:

1. This, the third form of the Rite of Penance, necessitates a gathering of people. It is not to be used for an individual penitent. Given current restrictions on public gatherings, we cannot call people together for this rite. It would be used in a situation where a gathering of people is already in place, such as a prison, a jail, a nursing home, or a hospital ward, where the infected people are in imminent danger of death. The priest would need to explain to the people how to participate in the rite. All prudent measures should be taken so that the penitents can hear the absolution, such as a public address system.
2. In the Diocese of San Angelo, general absolution may be imparted lawfully only in cases of grave necessity, where many people present and in need of absolution have the coronavirus and are in imminent danger of death.
3. In order for this absolution to be valid, the individual penitents must have the firm resolution to have recourse to sacramental Confession as soon as possible.

The priest who grants general absolution is obliged to inform the diocesan bishop ahead of time insofar as possible or, if he cannot, to inform the diocesan bishop as soon as possible afterward.

4. For more explanation of general absolution, please see chapter III of the *Rite of Penance*.

C. Those who have no recourse to sacramental absolution:

When a person finds it impossible to receive sacramental absolution, they obtain forgiveness of sins, even mortal ones, through a sincere request for forgiveness, coming from a love of God, with perfect contrition and the firm resolution to make a sacramental Confession as soon as possible (CCC, no. 1452).

IV. EUCHARISTIC ADORATION

- A. When possible, it is good to make Eucharistic Adoration available to the people. This may involve adoration of the Blessed Sacrament inside the tabernacle, or exposition, or even Eucharistic processions.
- B. Any processions should include proper social distancing. Any procession that includes public streets requires permission by local civil authorities.
- C. Planning should include sufficient security personnel, which can sometimes be quite expensive.
- D. Holy Hours may be conducted indoors or outdoors.

V. BAPTISM

- A. Baptisms are no longer limited to 10 people. They are subject to the same social distancing and spacing requirements as Mass in the Church.
- B. Carefully avoid cross-contamination of water and oils. To avoid the spread of germs, do not use the same water for more than one person. The minister is to clean and disinfect his hands after baptizing and anointing each person.
- C. Please exercise caution and avoid situations that involve large gatherings or lengthy travel.
- D. In order to provide sufficient time and space for Baptisms, it may be necessary to schedule more ceremonies in order to accommodate people safely.

VI. CONFIRMATION

- A. Pastors are granted the faculty to confirm candidates during the time of the coronavirus protocols, until this faculty is withdrawn.
- B. Confirmations that have been postponed because of the coronavirus may be rescheduled and administered either by the bishop or the pastor. Planning should carefully take into account the number of candidates, the size of the crowd, and the size of the church.
- C. Confirmation Masses are subject to the same social distancing and spacing requirements as other Masses in the Church. Please exercise caution and avoid situations that involve large gatherings or lengthy travel.
- D. Confirmation Masses for large groups should be postponed until a phase when sufficient crowds are allowed inside church buildings to accommodate the group safely.

Confirmation Masses for small groups may be celebrated in Phase One if the number of people will fit into the church under current spacing requirements.

- E. The minister is to clean and disinfect his hands after anointing each person.
- F. The anointing with Chrism may not be done with a glove, cotton swab, or cotton ball.
- G. Handshaking is to be omitted.

VII. FIRST COMMUNION

- A. These Masses are no longer limited to 10 people. They are subject to the same social distancing and spacing requirements as other Masses in the Church.

- B. Please exercise caution and avoid situations that involve large gatherings or lengthy travel.
- C. Before scheduling First Communion Mass for a large group, please wait until a phase when sufficient crowds are allowed inside church buildings to accommodate the group safely.
- D. Smaller First Communion Masses may be celebrated in Phase One if the number of people will fit into the church under current spacing requirements.
- E. In the case of a long delay for a group First Communion Mass, families may arrange for the First Communion of individuals at other regular parish Masses.
- F. The Precious Blood is not to be distributed during Phase One, not even to first communicants.
- G. As a temporary measure due to the current pandemic, Communion is to be distributed in the hand only, not on the tongue. This is in service of the common good (canon 223).

VIII. RCIA SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION

- A. These liturgies are no longer limited to 10 people. They are subject to the same social distancing and spacing requirements as other Masses in the Church.
- B. Please exercise caution and avoid situations that involve large gatherings or lengthy travel.
- C. The minister is to clean and disinfect his hands (using disinfectant wipes with alcohol content) after baptizing or anointing each person. Carefully avoid cross-contamination of water and oils. To avoid the spread of germs, do not use the same water for more than one person.
- D. The anointing with Chrism may not be done with a disposable glove, cotton swab, or cotton ball.
- E. Handshaking is to be omitted.
- F. Before scheduling a Mass of Christian Initiation for a large group, please wait until a phase when sufficient crowds are allowed inside church buildings to accommodate the group safely.
- G. Smaller Masses of Christian Initiation may be celebrated in Phase One if the number of people will fit into the church under current spacing requirements.

- H. The Vigil of Pentecost (May 30) may be a good date for these sacraments, depending on the number of people and the size of the church. The priest may choose other dates as needed, according to the needs of the people and the parish.

IX. QUINCEAÑERAS

- A. Quinceañera liturgies are no longer limited to 10 people. They are subject to the same social distancing and spacing requirements as other Masses in the Church.
- B. Please exercise caution and avoid situations that involve large gatherings or lengthy travel.
- C. Before scheduling a Quinceañera for a large group, please wait until a phase when sufficient crowds are allowed inside church buildings to accommodate the group safely.

X. WEDDINGS

- A. Weddings are no longer limited to 10 people. They are subject to the same social distancing and spacing requirements as other Masses in the Church.
- B. Please exercise caution and avoid situations that involve large gatherings or lengthy travel.
- C. Before scheduling a wedding for a large group, please wait until a phase when sufficient crowds are allowed inside church buildings to accommodate the group safely.
- D. Smaller weddings may be celebrated in Phase One if the number of people will fit into the church under current spacing requirements.
- E. The Precious Blood is not to be distributed during Phase One, not even to the wedding couple.

XI. ANOINTING OF THE SICK AND VIATICUM

- A. Priests are to make these sacraments available to those who need them, but they must practice careful precautions to avoid the transmission of disease. Anointing should be done by the priest wearing a face mask or cloth face covering and disposable gloves and using a disposable cotton swab. Steps should be taken to avoid contaminating the oil stock. The used cotton swab should be isolated, contained, and later burned. It is suggested that a brown paper lunch sack be used for this. The priest should clean and sanitize his hands before and after the encounter.
- B. In order for the anointing to be valid, the priest must be physically present to the penitent in person. The priest himself must both pronounce the entirety of the sacramental formula and anoint the recipient's body with the oil of the sick. The priest may not delegate the act of anointing to another person.

- C. For a very thorough explanation of how to administer the sacrament of Anointing of the Sick during the time of a pandemic, please see the 11-page resource provided by the Thomistic Institute at the Pontifical Faculty of the Dominican House of Studies in Washington, D.C. This resource is posted on the Priest Portal of the Diocese of San Angelo website.
- D. Masses with communal Anointing of the Sick should not be held at this time.

XII. FUNERALS

- A. We must pray for the dead and bury them.
- B. Priests and deacons should talk with the local funeral homes to inform them of the change of our protocols.
- C. Funerals are no longer limited to 10 people. They are subject to the same social distancing and spacing requirements as other Masses in the Church.
- D. At graveside services, social distancing is required.