

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.