

Catholic Mutual... " CARES "

Return to Mass

Once it is determined that State/Local directives are gradually going to allow larger gatherings in your state/community, you may be able to offer Mass to a limited number of worshippers. Do not assume the spread of the virus has diminished because of these new guidelines. We must maintain and continue our precautionary measures to ensure we are protecting one another from the spread of COVID-19. It will be important to monitor any increase of COVID-19 cases in your community. In addition to the CDC and your State/Local Health Department recommendations, the following guidelines should be considered for everyone's safety as you gradually reopen the church for worship.

- Parishioners and all church staff should be reminded if they are considered "high risk," and more vulnerable to the virus, they should consider not attending Mass in the church and continue to participate in virtual or televised Mass.
- In an effort to reduce exposure, only essential persons need to assist with Mass. If possible, limit the number of ushers, greeters, altar servers and/or volunteers needed for each Mass.
- The church should post a link to the COVID-19 exposure questions on their website (i.e., have you traveled out of the country, do you have a fever, have you been exposed to someone with COVID-19, etc.?) If a parishioner answers yes to any of these, we recommend they do not attend Mass at the church.
- To ensure social distancing is maintained, there will be a limit on the number of people that will be allowed to attend mass in the church. At some point, you may need to turn people away. This may be difficult and upsetting to some; however, maintaining social distancing requirements as established by the CDC is crucial.
- You will need to establish how many parishioners can be in the church for Mass. Identify areas on your designated pews that represent a 6' distance in seating. Using tape or another product to make this separation would be helpful. Keep in mind this may not be suitable for family seating. When seating a family, the usher will need to be certain the 6' distance is adhered to between the family and the next parishioner(s). *While there may be other distancing recommendations from other authorities, we strongly recommend you adhere to the guidelines as established by the CDC and your State Health Department.*
- It is recommended that only every other pew is utilized to help maintain social distancing.
- If you know that your maximum capacity with social distancing is below normal Mass attendance, consider assigning your parishioners to masses. For example, parishioners whose last names begin with A - D, could attend the first Mass of the day. Additional masses may be needed, if possible.
- You may consider several shorter masses be conducted throughout the day to minimize the time of exposure to parishioners. Adequate time between masses should be allowed to avoid overcrowding and provide ample time to disinfect the interior of the church.

- While the Sacrament of Holy Communion is of great meaning to our faith, this should not be allowed to help reduce the potential of spreading the virus. Holy Water fonts should also be removed to control the spread.
- Disinfect the pews and other areas of the church, including restrooms, after each Mass. See *Cleaning and Disinfecting CARES* document attached.
- Your building(s) should have properly functioning HVAC systems to ensure adequate ventilation. In addition, you may consider opening windows during Mass if applicable.
- Consider the removal of all hymnals, Daily Missals and bulletins until the COVID-19 crisis has passed. Otherwise, these items need to be disinfected after each Mass.
- To prevent additional cleaning and help control the spread, the church should close off any rooms/areas not needed to reduce access to these areas. Restrooms will need to be available and properly cleaned and disinfected.
- While it is still recommended to wear masks when venturing outside the home, we encourage you to remind your parishioners and essential persons needed to assist with Mass to do the same while in attendance.
- Before and after Mass, do not allow people to assemble and socialize outside/inside of church.
- It may be necessary to install temporary markings (cones/tape), directing the flow of foot traffic in and out of the church. Only one entrance into the church is recommended to ensure control of the number of individuals entering the building.
- Ideally, entrance door(s) should be propped open to allow entry without the need to touch door handles. The doors can be closed once Mass begins and then reopened concluding Mass. If this is not an option, recommend designating an employee or volunteer to hold the door open.
- It will be important to have orderly seating and dismissal of parishioners. First parishioners arriving should be ushered to front of church and fill in the rest of the seating areas as more enter. After Mass, parishioners should be ushered out of church starting at the back pew working toward the front.
- Hand sanitizer should be provided at each entrance for parishioners to utilize. Pump bottles could be placed on tables or, there are free standing pumps that you place your hand under and the sanitizer drops down. It is also recommended that you suggest to your parishioners they bring their own hand sanitizer with them while in attendance.
- Consider installing hand sanitizer in the restrooms as well with signs reiterating the CDC guidelines for a minimum of 20 second handwashing.
- Use caution when collecting offerings. Do not pass around collection baskets rather, have one basket/container at each entrance being utilized and allow parishioners to donate at those sites.
- To further assist you when considering a return to Mass, please see the following link for additional guidance on the Decision Tree chart as established by the World Health Organization (WHO).

https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/who-2019-ncov-mg-decision-tree-religious.pdf?sfvrsn=f3433c0a_2

This document is subject to change based on any new public directives by governmental authorities.

It is recommended that daily updates from the CDC and your State/Local Health Departments are heeded and procedures updated as needed. Please refer to the CDC's website at the following link:
<https://www.cdc.gov/>

Should you have any questions or need further assistance, please contact your Risk Management Representative.