

Detailed Plan for re-opening Catholic Churches

-The Church will continue to dispense anyone from their obligation to attend Sunday Mass. This dispensation will specifically include: those with any sign of illness, the elderly, those with underlying health issues and those who do not feel comfortable coming (According to labour law, this is equally true of priests).

-The detailed plan (and general dispensation) will be made available to all parishioners on all the diocesan and parish internet platforms and will be circulated as widely as possible via available e-mail list.

-Because **Worship Services are capped at a maximum of 50 people** (This number includes the priest and all ministers), all people must pre-register for the Mass(es) they are planning to attend. Contact your Parish Office for more information. Parishes will also have a method of taking down names for each Mass, to fulfil contact tracing requirements. These attendance lists will be kept on record for Contact Tracing purposes only.

-Clear signage and volunteers will be placed in visible areas, outside the church, reminding people of the requirements regarding loitering (inside and outside the church), physical distancing and seating protocol. The wearing of cloth face masks will be left to the discretion of the individual.

-All people should enter through one set of doors to control the movement of people (Entrance doors will be clearly identified and other doors will have clear signage indicating that they are not to be used (cannot be locked, according to fire regulations) and be clearly identified as closed. Volunteers will need to prop the church doors open before a celebration and shortly before the end of a celebration to allow people to enter and exit the church easily without touching the handles.

-The Entrance into the church will be carefully monitored to:

- 1) regulate the flow of traffic (physical distancing),
- 2) make sure people have read the entrance protocol,
- 3) are free of any signs of illness,
- 4) have not travelled over the last 14 days, and
- 5) to remind people of the collection box at the back of the Church.

-A hand sanitizing station will be available at the back of the church.

-All Holy Water fonts will be physically removed.

-People will be directed to sit on marked spots on every third pew (separated by two meters, one from the other) or, in cases of people in the same “Bubble”, all together in one pew. Only every third pew will be used, all others will be cordoned off.

-Churches will be filled beginning from the front pew and working towards the back (to minimize aisle traffic). Those who insist on sitting towards the back will be encouraged to wait in their cars until the start of Mass.

-An announcement regarding bathroom protocol (including taped off waiting line) and traffic patterns within the church will be made prior to the start of the Mass. The general principle: Centre aisle is used for traffic towards the altar; side aisles are used for traffic towards the back. Taped arrows will be placed in each aisle to ensure one way-traffic.

-Washroom is monitored and sanitized after use.

-Access to the sacristy is limited to one sacristan and one priest. Those entering the sacristy must wash their hands with soap prior to setting up, cleaning up or vesting. Fresh linen is to be used for each Mass.

-There will be no song sheets or books available in the pews and **No Singing by the Congregation** by order of the Provincial Public Health office (singing can lead to a greater amount of droplets and distances spread). A soloist (with an instrumentalist) can still sing but at a minimum of 6 meters from the nearest person and facing a neutral direction).

-No processions (at the beginning or end of Mass).

-No altar servers. Roman Missal on stand near presider’s chair.

-No children’s liturgy.

-One Reader reads all the readings and intercessions (no shared ambo). The Reader sits on the outside corner of the first pew.

-The Book of the Gospel is read from the Presider’s Chair (no candles on either side). The homily is given from the Presider’s Chair.

-There is no procession of the gifts. The collection is not taken at this time (there will be a clearly marked drop-off box at the back of the church at the end of Mass).

The priest will disinfect his hands at the beginning of Mass, prior to setting the altar, at the time of giving communion and whenever he inadvertently touches the skin of a communicant (there should be a little disinfectant station in easy reach of the center aisle at Communion time).

-No altar servers. A credence table is placed close to the altar. The priest sets the altar himself and washes his hands at the credence table.

-The communion hosts that are distributed to the people will be placed on a separate corporal to the side of the altar away from the direction the priest is speaking.

-The Sign of Peace is replaced with a bow or a wave to your neighbours.

-Only the celebrant drinks from the chalice.

-Unless the Church architecture allows for multiple communion stations that can be accommodated with clear one-way traffic patterns (coming up for communion and returning to their pew (also, no two communion lines side by side in the same aisle), the priest will serve as the sole distributor of the Body of Christ. Communion stations will include clear 2 meter taped markers on the floor, this is also true for priest and communicant, and a bottle of disinfectant on a table nearby (in case of inadvertent contact takes place).

The safest way to distribute Holy Communion is by having a plexiglass partition between the priest and communicant, whereby the communicant extends their hands through an opening and the priest places the Blessed Sacrament in their hands (without making physical contact). The construction of such a partition could be replaced by the priest wearing a face shield when distributing communion.

-Clear verbal directives will be given prior to communion, emphasizing the following points:

1) No one should feel forced to receive Communion if you feel hesitant in any way but you still need to follow the traffic pattern and back to your seat to allow others further down your pew to receive ,

2) people will be asked to stand up and move towards the center aisle (observing strict physical distancing measures) one pew at a time. Please remain seated as long as your pew is not being served,

3) Take note that the aisle is clearly marked by tape to indicate the distance between each person in line,

4) When leaving/returning to your pew, do not run your hand along the pew,

5) the short verbal exchange between priest and communicant at the time of communion (the assent of faith “The Body of Christ” / “Amen”) can be done with the entire congregation, while the priest is still at the altar. If this verbal exchange has been done at the altar, it does not have to be repeated at the moment of distributing/receiving Communion, the priest will simply hold up the host (to symbolize the line “The Body of Christ”) and the communicant will nod “symbolizing their assent or “Amen””

6) Communion is given in the hand only,

7) Blessings are done respecting physical distancing guidelines (no touching).

-After the Instructions are given, if the verbal exchange takes place at the altar, the Priest will say: “The Body of Christ” and the people will respond: “Amen”. Only then will the priest go to the front of the aisle to distribute Holy Communion.

-Gloves and masks are to be removed prior to receiving communion.

-Special instructions will be given prior to leaving regarding:

1) Collection drop-off boxes available at the back of the church,

2) People will exit the Church, one pew at a time, beginning from the back,

3) There are no gatherings amongst the people or with the celebrant on the church steps or in the parking lot,

4) There is no printed bulletin, available on the parish website or by e-mail,

5) Emphasize the importance of staying in contact with one another and your (Priest’s) availability to minister to their needs.

-The main doors are propped open prior to the conclusion of Mass.

-Volunteers will keep watch over the people exiting the church and ensure physical distancing protocols are observed. They should also keep an eye on the collection drop-off boxes. When everyone has left, two volunteers, observing physical distancing, are tasked to make sure the collection is put where it belongs until such time as it can be counted in accordance with appropriate protocol.

-All vessels are to be thoroughly purified and cleaned with soap and hot water after each Mass.

-A cleaning team will disinfect all points of contact (benches, doors, ramps, bathrooms) after each celebration. The Sacristan will sanitize liturgical books, ambo, vessels, tabernacle, altar and chair. Multiple Masses in the same location will have to be spaced in such a way that this can take place.

-Those who decide not to attend church, for any reason, are invited to read the Word of God, to set aside some time for prayer, and to partake in Mass celebrations offered through the media (TV, radio, internet). They may also want to participate in a weekday Mass where attendance is much less numerous.

-For visits to church for times of prayer or adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, similar guidelines should be followed, especially regarding seating and one way aisles.