



CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF ST. PETERSBURG

COURAGEOUSLY *Living the Gospel*

Guidance for Parishes Regarding COVID-19 — Updated February 22, 2023

General Considerations

While the COVID-19 coronavirus is still a matter of concern, the number of cases continues to decline. As an update to the previous *Guidelines for Parishes Regarding COVID-19, published April 20, 2021*, the following recommendations have been provided for the continued safety of the members of your parish community.

- Parishes should decide about adaptations based on local considerations and the pastoral needs of parishioners. What is right for one parish may not work in another parish.
- It will be helpful for priests to explain adaptations of the guidelines and why they are appropriate for their community.
- As parishes seek to continually adapt for the safety of our parishioners, we also urge individuals and families to take personal responsibility to protect themselves and to make appropriate decisions that best meet their needs.

The Celebration of Mass

- Wearing masks may help some persons feel comfortable about returning to Mass, especially those at higher risk for illness or those who care for family members or others who are ill. However, the use of masks should not be required.
- If it is feasible, pastors may decide to continue offering one livestream or recorded Mass per weekend, especially if a significant number of homebound Catholics reside within the parish boundaries. It would be helpful to refer to this Mass as a “Mass for the Sick and Homebound,” so that parishioners may understand the intended audience for the livestream or recorded Mass.
- Unless they are incapable of doing so for some reason, it is presumed that deacons, readers, servers, music ministry personnel, and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion regularly fulfill their duties.

- With consideration toward the general population of the parish, making hand sanitizer available for use by liturgical ministers and other Mass attendees is recommended.
- The offertory collection may be conducted in the manner that was common before the beginning of the pandemic. However, if a pastor wishes to utilize an alternative method, such as making a stationary collection box or basket available, he may do so. Alternative means of providing donations, such as online giving, should also be made available to parishioners and visitors, if feasible.
- It is up to the discretion of the pastor whether the sign of peace is to take place, keeping in mind that it is optional even under ordinary circumstances.
- Distribution of the Precious Blood to members of the faithful is to be determined by each individual pastor, after taking into consideration the general population of the parish and whether they would be at greater risk for illness. If it is determined that distribution of the Precious Blood should be reinstated, there initially might only need to be a small number of stations at which it is distributed.
- If the distribution of the Precious Blood is to be reinstated, it may be opportune to recruit new Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion to participate in the ministry should there be a lack of existing EMHC's due to COVID concerns.

General Guidelines Related to the Church Building

- Parishes may place hymnals and missalettes in the pews. However, according to parish circumstances, it may still be advisable to offer printed worship aids for single use, which are then disposed of after each Mass. Electronic projection of hymns and responses may also be used, if the parish is equipped to do so.

Sacramental Life

- Weddings and funerals may follow similar guidelines as Sunday Mass. It is permissible for the bride and groom to receive Communion under both species, provided they receive from a different chalice than the presider.
- Baptisms should also continue. Pastors are free to determine whether clean water should be used for each baptism.