



Diocese of Shreveport

Office of the Bishop

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Memo to: All Priests and Deacons in the Diocese of Shreveport

From: Bishop Francis I. Malone

Date: May 8, 2020

RE: **Directives for Worship During the COVID-19 Pandemic**

The mandate promulgated by me, on March 13, 2020, dispensing the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays to the faithful of the Diocese of Shreveport and the restrictions placed on the public celebration of Mass **remains in effect until further notice**. Recognizing the need to begin preparing for the eventuality of once again celebrating Mass with the people, I issue the following directives. Related questions or concerns should be directed to our Vicar General, Fr. Matthew Long at vg@dioshpt.org or to my office.

Directives for Worship during the COVID-19 Pandemic

General Norms:

1. The Faithful continue to be dispensed from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass.
2. If someone has preexisting conditions that make them vulnerable, if they are feeling sick, suspect they may be sick or have a sick member in their family, they should not attend Mass.
3. The number of people who are allowed to gather in the Church for Mass or other events must not exceed 25% of the total church occupancy. (This number may be subject to change based on government directives.)
4. For those who are uncomfortable gathering in a larger group for Sunday Mass but still desire to receive the Eucharist, daily Masses will be available.
5. For parishes whose average Sunday Mass attendance exceeds 25% of the total church occupancy, the following must be done:
 - a. Additional Masses should be added on Sunday and for the Anticipated Mass to accommodate the total number who regularly attend Mass at your parish.
 - b. Mass can also be simulcast to another location on your campus, i.e. gym, parish hall, and then communion distributed in that space.
 - i. All the guidelines as to occupancy and social distancing must be followed.
 - ii. The people should be encouraged to participate fully with responses and postures.

- c. People must reserve the Mass they plan to attend via social media, telephone and/or other electronic means.
 - i. Those who arrive at a Mass and do not have a registration may be directed to simulcast locations, or are invited to attend Mass at another time.
6. All hymnals and missalettes must be removed from the church.
 - a. Singing should not be encouraged for the congregation.
 - b. Music should be limited to instrumental, if possible.

Logistical Considerations:

1. Only the main door of the church should be used for entrance, with the exception of those with special needs.
 - a. Doors should be propped open or held open by greeters or ushers.
2. Ushers or church staff members must ensure that the number of parishioners allowed into the church does not exceed the occupancy requirement.
 - a. There should be either a prepared roster for attendees at each Mass, or an active count being taken at the door.
3. The church must be sanitized after each Mass, including pews, bathrooms and doors.
 - a. You can encourage the parishioners to wipe down the area they sat in or have ushers or staff members do so.
 - b. You can also create a sanitizing ministry, with a crew ready after each Mass.
 - c. You should provide the necessary items to sanitize the church.
4. Social distancing must be observed (6 feet apart).
 - a. Families who live in the same household may sit together in one pew.
 - b. Close every other pew in the Church.
 - c. Only allow seating on either end of each pew with a 6 foot neutral zone in the middle.
 - i. Lines must be marked in the aisle to make sure social distancing is observed in the communion line.
5. Limit the ministers allowed in the sanctuary to clerics, seminarians and altar servers.
 - a. Use the minimum number of altar servers necessary for a proper celebration of the Mass.
 - b. Utilize only one reader for each Mass.
6. Require all ministers to use proper hygiene of their hands.
 - a. Ministers must not touch their eyes, nose or mouth during the Mass.
7. Ministers and parishioners must all wear masks during the Mass except during communion.
 - a. Children under the age of seven (7) are not required to wear masks.
8. Collection baskets should not be passed among the people. The ushers can either use baskets on long poles or the baskets can be placed at the entrance to the church.
9. Church restrooms should be limited to emergency use.
 - a. Encourage parishioners to use the restroom in their home before coming to Mass.
10. No paper bulletins or worship aids are allowed.

Liturgical Considerations:

1. It is appropriate to use a recited entrance antiphon and communion antiphon at Masses where there is no entrance or communion hymn.
2. There should be no presentation of gifts. Instead, the gifts should be placed on the credence table or the altar prior to Mass.
3. During the Our Father, the faithful must not hold hands, including families.
 - a. The proper posture is hands clasped in a prayerful position.
4. The priest, deacon and any extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion must wear masks during the distribution of Holy Communion.
 - a. They must also sanitize their hands prior to and after the distribution of Communion.
5. Gloves must not be worn during distribution of Communion by either the Minister or those receiving it.
6. Distribution of Communion:
 - a. Priests, deacons, and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion over the age of 65 shall not distribute communion.
 - b. Different ways to distribute Communion:
 - i. All remain in their place and the minister goes throughout the Church passing through the empty pews to distribute to each individual.
 - ii. People come forward as usual, maintaining social distancing even in communion lines, and approach the minister as usual. In this option, the front pews must not be used for seating.
 1. It may be effective to mark distance on the floor so that parishioners have an easier time social distancing in line.
 - iii. People come forward as usual, maintaining social distancing, but they line up across the front in an area clearly marked and the minister comes to them. In this option, the front pews must not be used for seating.
 - c. Communion must be given with no bodily contact.
 - i. The preferred method of distribution during this time is on the hand.
 - ii. Let the Host touch the person's hand and then release it.
 - d. Communion on the tongue is not encouraged at this time.
 - i. It is at the pastor's discretion if communion on the tongue shall be offered.
 - ii. If it has been given the minister must pause, sanitize his hands, and continue the distribution of Communion.
 1. A table approximately waist high and large enough to place hand sanitizer, a towel, and the ciborium should be placed next to the distribution station in order to facilitate the sanitization between communicants.
 - iii. If an entire family is receiving communion on the tongue, it is appropriate to sanitize after distributing to the entire unit as if they were one parishioner.
 - e. The Precious Blood is not to be offered.
 - f. People who are **not** receiving communion should be discouraged from approaching the ministers for a blessing.

- i. All the people present will receive a blessing prior to the dismissal at the conclusion of Mass.
- g. The sign of peace should be omitted from the Communion Rite.
 - i. If at the pastor's discretion the sign of peace is to be offered then it should be done with a bow to the other person.

Dismissal:

1. Social distancing must be observed at the conclusion of Mass.
 - a. People should be directed not to gather in the Church, the Narthex or the Gathering Space but to exit immediately.
 - b. There should be ushers or staff members who assist in guiding the faithful from the Church.
 - c. The use of multiple exits is encouraged.
 - d. Parishioners should be encouraged to exit immediately so that the sanitization of the church can begin.
 - i. Gathering in parking lots should be discouraged in order to respect social distancing and allow room for those arriving for the next Mass.

Thank you for your continued efforts to meet the needs of the people of our Diocese during this challenging time in the life of the Church. Please be assured of my continual prayers and gratitude to each of you and all the people of our diocese.