



Response to Coronavirus
Public Celebrations of Mass

DIOCESE of ARLINGTON

GUIDE for PRIESTS

May 14, 2020

All the faithful of the Diocese of Arlington are **dispensed from the obligation to attend Mass** on Sundays and holydays of obligation until further notice.

Planning & Preparing

Those Who Are Vulnerable • Please encourage those who are “vulnerable” to infection or the serious effects of coronavirus, as well as those who care for the vulnerable, to avoid gatherings of the general public.

Those who are “vulnerable”

- are over the age of 65,
- have existing heart or lung conditions,
- have diabetes, &/or
- are otherwise immuno-compromised.

Those Who Feel Sick • Please encourage those who feel sick in any way, are coughing, or are sneezing frequently to avoid public gatherings, including liturgical celebrations.

Livestreamed Masses • Continue to livestream Masses if you are able. Encourage the vulnerable, the sick, or those concerned with their safety or the safety of those whom they regularly encounter to continue to unite prayerfully to the Mass via livestream.

In-Person Participation • Each parish is to coordinate in-person participation for Mass & other liturgies. Consider online “sign up” platforms, or organizing by last name or parish envelope number, or other suitable means.

Bination & Trination • The laws of bination & trination remain in effect.

Person-Per-Gathering Limits • The Diocese requires every parish to follow person-per-gathering limits set by public health authorities, which may vary by locality. Please communicate with parishioners about participating in person. If the number of participants exceeds the limit, you or a minister will have to ask individuals to leave. Please avoid putting yourself or others in this unfortunate position.

Social Distancing • The Diocese requires every parish to ensure social distancing with due respect for the reverent enactment of the sacred rites. Porters & ushers can assist, as can thoughtful use of reverent signs & other markers on the walls, pews, &/or floors.

Disinfection & Ventilation • The Diocese requires every parish to ensure disinfection & ventilation before & after each liturgy. The church may be closed briefly, if necessary.

Holy Water & Hymnals • The Diocese requires every parish to remove holy water from fonts & hymnals/missalettes from pews.

Porters • For each liturgy, parishes are encouraged to assign at least one “porter” — a minister who keeps watch at the doors. Porters ensure that capacity limitations & related safety practices are observed. Special training for porters, especially in carrying out this ministry with charity, is encouraged.

Face Coverings • Communicate to parishioners that they are expected to wear their own cloth face coverings or disposable face masks. Consider having a limited supply for those who are truly not able to obtain them. The priest-celebrant may determine his own use of a face covering. It is permitted to wear a face covering for the entire Mass.

Hand Hygiene • Thoroughly disinfect your hands immediately before the liturgy. You are encouraged to disinfect your hands again before distributing Communion (after consuming the Sacrament). Hand sanitizers should contain at least 60% alcohol.

Signs • The Diocese requires that signs be clearly posted on two topics. 1– Anyone with COVID symptoms or exposure in the past 14 days must return home. 2– Basic prevention reminders (e.g. social distancing, etc.). Signs are to be posted in all applicable languages.

Celebrating

Sacred Space • Outdoor Masses are not permitted without the Bishop's permission.

Singing • During Phase I, consider temporarily limiting or even omitting singing.

Processions • Ministers should maintain social distancing during processions. Members of the assembly should be situated so that they are six feet from processional routes.

Presentation of the Gifts • The Diocese requires that the presentation of gifts by members of the assembly be omitted.

Collection • A collection may take place. The Diocese prohibits passing collection baskets. Baskets with long handles or stationary baskets at the entrance/s of the church are permitted. Where it is available, encourage parishioners to utilize online giving.

Lord's Prayer • The Diocese prohibits holding hands during the Lord's Prayer.

Sign of Peace • The Diocese requires that the invitation "Let us offer each other the sign of peace" & the exchange of peace that follows be omitted.

Communion

- The Diocese suppresses the distribution of the Precious Blood until further notice.
- Only priests, deacons, & instituted acolytes distribute Communion until further notice. In exceptional cases, permission to use EMHCs (other than instituted acolytes) is to be obtained from the Vicar General.
- All present who are in a state of grace may receive Communion. Those who have health concerns are not obliged.
- Please develop & communicate parish procedures for distributing Communion.
- Encourage communicants to disinfect their hands immediately before receiving Communion. Remind them to maintain social distancing in the Communion Procession.
- Each communicant retains the right to decide how to receive, whether on the tongue or in the hand. The Diocese encourages each person to pray about his or her own decision regarding reception of Communion.*
- You are encouraged to disinfect your hands immediately after each & every communicant who receives on the tongue, even if no physical contact has occurred. You are also encouraged to disinfect your hands immediately if accidental contact is made with a communicant's hand.

* Information available in U.S. Center for Disease Control, *Interim Guidance for Leaders of Faith Communities* (23 Mar 2020) <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/guidance-community-faith-organizations.html>; & World Health Organization, *Guidance for Faith Communities* (7 Apr 2020) <https://www.who.int/publications-detail/practical-considerations-and-recommendations-for-religious-leaders-and-faith-based-communities-in-the-context-of-covid-19>.

