

HOLY SPIRIT CATHOLIC CHURCH, SANTA ROSA, CA

GUIDELINES ON RE-OPENING CATHOLIC

CHURCHES FOR MASS

June 2020

These guidelines, which are part of Bulletin 54 from the Diocese of Santa Rosa, California, should be read in connection with the Holy Spirit Catholic Church, Santa Rosa, California COVID-19 Protection Plan dated June 2020. Edits to the Diocesan Bulletin specific to Holy Spirit Parish are in italics.

Training in these matters for all employees and volunteers will be accomplished by providing them with a copy of these guidelines and the Holy Spirit Church COVID-19 Protection Plan.

General Principles:

The COVID-19 pandemic presents a serious threat to physical health. In response, public authorities are right to place limits on gatherings, to discourage unnecessary activities, and to call for physical distancing. At the same time, access to divine worship and to sacraments is of high importance for the spiritual good and the overall well-being of the faithful. As Catholics, we maintain that Christian worship and sacraments are just as necessary for the human person -- indeed, far more necessary -- than many commercial activities now permitted. This is particularly true in a time of widespread anxiety and potentially grave sickness.

The guidance provided here aims to clarify how public Masses, can be responsibly offered, especially as peak restrictions on public activities begin to be relaxed in phases. With proper safeguards to prevent infection, and integrating the scientific guidance of public health authorities as outlined below, it is possible to provide the Mass and the sacraments (Based on a document provided by the Thomistic Institute: Dr. Timothy P. Flanigan, M.D. (Prof. of Medicine (infectious diseases), Alpert Medical School of Brown University); Fr. Nicanor Austriaco, O.P. (Prof. of Biology, Providence College); Dr. Thomas W. McGovern, M.D. (Catholic Medical Association National Board Member, Former Clinical Research Physician, U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases); Fr. Dominic Legge, O.P. (Assist. Prof. of Theology, Director of the Thomistic Institute, Dominican House of Studies); Fr. Dominic Langevin, O.P. (Assistant Professor, Editor of The Thomist, Dominican House of Studies); Fr. Paul Scalia (Vicar for Clergy, Diocese of Arlington); Fr. Gregory Pine, O.P. (Thomistic Institute). We are grateful for the comments and review of Rev. Msgr. Robert J. Vitillo (Attaché, Permanent Observer Mission of the Holy See to the UN in Geneva and Secretary General, International Catholic Migration Commission); Dr. Thomas Cesario, M.D. (Prof. of Medicine (infectious diseases), Univ. of Calif. Irvine School of Medicine); Dr. Paul Cieslak, M.D. (Infectious Diseases & Public Health, Catholic Medical Association member); Dr. Daniel Sulmasy, M.D., Ph.D. (Prof. of Medicine, Georgetown University); Dr. Suzanne Strom, M.D. (Associate Clinical Professor, University of California, Irvine); Fr. Christopher Pollard (Diocese of Arlington); and Fr. John Baptist Ku, O.P. (Assoc. Prof., Dominican House of Studies).

The following is based on current guidance issued by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other public health authorities. These guidelines also integrate the requirements of the Catholic Church for the valid and licit celebration of the Mass, in accord with Catholic teaching, liturgical law, and canon law. The authors have endeavored to formulate them with great care to preserve and respect the reverence due to the Holy Eucharist and the powerful liturgical and sacramental symbolism of the rites of the Mass.

April 22 information on how COVID-19 spreads:

According to the latest information from the CDC (April 22, 2020), “[t]he virus that causes COVID-19 is thought to spread mainly from person to person, mainly through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs. Spread is more likely when people are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet).”

The CDC adds: “Currently, there is no evidence to support transmission of COVID-19 associated with food.” “It may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object, like a packaging container, that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes, **but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.** In general, because of poor survivability of these coronaviruses on surfaces, there is likely very low risk of spread from food products or packaging.”

GENERAL PROVISIONS

- Everyone in the Diocese is dispensed from the obligation to attend Mass until further notice. Anyone feeling sick or experiencing respiratory symptoms, even if not suspected to be COVID-related should stay home, they too are dispensed.
- Encourage those who are at higher risk from COVID-19 (i.e. those who are older or who have underlying health conditions) to stay home. As circumstances allow, a visit from a priest, deacon, or extraordinary minister of Holy Communion to bring them the Eucharist may be possible. *The parish letter dated June 3, 2020 encouraged those parishioners who are vulnerable to the virus to continue to shelter-in-place and watch Mass on-line.*
- Post Signs and announce for the faithful that anyone with a cough of any sort, and anyone feeling sick, should not come to the church for a visit or for any ceremonies. *The CDC signs “Stop the Spread of Germs” and “COVID-19 Symptoms” are displayed at the entrance to Mass.*
- Place hand sanitizer near the entrances to a church. Encourage those entering and exiting to perform hand hygiene. *Hand sanitizers are placed at the entrance to church and temperature screeners and signage encourage using hand sanitizer when entering church.*
- Regularly clean and disinfect commonly touched surfaces in the church. *A volunteer cleaning crew, wearing masks and gloves, applies disinfectant to the pews, kneelers, chairs, restrooms and other high-touch surfaces after each Mass.*
- Masses should be limited in attendance, depending on the guidance of public health authorities. The limit set by the State is 25% of capacity or a maximum in any space of 100.

- Guidance from the California Governor says that, during the second phase of reduced restrictions, Church gatherings may be as large as 100 persons. It adds that venues like “places of worship. . . can operate under moderate physical distancing protocols.” That is, according to the federal government’s guidance, a church can hold gatherings as large as 100 in this second phase if it can provide for observance of the physical distancing requirements. *Beginning June 7, 2020, Mass attendance is limited to 100.*
- Local health authorities may modify the federal guidance to be more or less restrictive for a given jurisdiction.
- Recommendation: Weekday Masses could be scheduled with greater frequency. Attendance could be first-come first-served, or allocated by some other system (a rotation system based on the first letter of last names, an online ticketing system like Eventbrite, etc.). *Survey Monkey software is used for parishioners to reserve their first, second and third choices for Mass attendance. Daily Mass Monday-Thursday is also offered.*
- Alternative: Larger “drive-in” or outdoor Masses remain possible, where the Mass is celebrated in a location visible to the faithful who remain in their cars. *Not feasible at Holy Spirit Church.*
- A List of all Volunteers for each Mass are to be retained for at least one month. *A sign-in sheet for all volunteers at each Mass is located near the church entrance and will be maintained in the sacristy.*

Limiting the Size of the Congregation & Physical Distancing

- Masses should be limited in attendance, in accord with public health authorities. *As communicated in June 3, 2020 parish letter, Mass attendance is limited to 100.*
- Observing moderate physical distancing means continuing to avoid “close contact” with those outside one’s household. (“Close contact” generally means avoiding being within 6 feet of another person, especially if this will last for 15 minutes or more.) Being within 6 feet of another person for brief moments and exchanges is permitted in this phase. *Pews are marked with blue tape for six feet or more distance between seating. Chairs are spaced six feet apart and the floor marked with tape for each chair’s location.*
- State or local health authorities may modify the federal guidance to be more or less restrictive for a given jurisdiction. For example, some jurisdictions may allow more people to be present depending on the capacity of the church building (e.g., the fire code capacity).
- Recommendation: Masses, especially weekday, could be scheduled with greater frequency. Attendance could be first-come first-served, or allocated by some other system (a phone pre-registration system, a rotation system based on the first letter of last names, an online ticketing system like Eventbrite, etc.). *Parishioners sign up for Mass reservations using Survey Monkey, by submitting paper forms or by phone call.*
- Strict Physical Distancing: A Catholic church may hold public Masses for as many as 100 persons (taking account of local health guidance), as long as it maintains strict physical distancing. (See U.S. federal guidelines.) For a public Mass, to maintain strict physical distancing:
- The faithful should maintain a 6-foot distance from each other at all times.

- Recommendation: Use tape to close off rows of seating in the church, in order to guide the faithful to sit at least 6 feet from each other (for example, allow seating every second or third row). *Every other row is closed off with tape, as are the additional supply of chairs.*
- Members of a single household do not need to practice physical distancing with each other and so may sit together in the same row. (For example, if a group arrived in a single private vehicle, they could sit together.) *Members of the same household may sit in the side pews or the larger pews in the back of church.*
- In areas where the faithful might stand in line waiting to receive Holy Communion, place tape on the floor to indicate proper spacing between persons. *The floor is marked with tape, six feet apart, to help parishioners in line for Holy Communion retain proper social distancing.*
- Station ushers at the entrances of the church to help “direct traffic,” to ensure that the faithful keep 6 feet from each other while entering and exiting the building. (Members of a single household may enter and exit together, since they do not need to practice physical distancing with each other.) *Ushers are at the door at weekend Masses to assist with seating as marked in the pews and chairs.*
- Suggestion: ask the congregation to come for Holy Communion by rows at the end of Mass and immediately depart to avoid crowding at the exits. *The pastor explains the protocol for receiving Holy Communion at the end of Mass, at the door, to retain their mask as they reply “Amen,” then depart, lower their mask and consume the consecrated host before returning to their cars, with masks. The deacon or Eucharistic Minister will distribute Holy Communion at the door during weekend Masses. The pastor will wear a mask to distribute Holy Communion at the weekday Masses.*
- If all the available spaces are filled, do not admit additional people to the church building.
- Encourage the faithful to maintain physical distancing everywhere on the church property (on the church steps, in the parking lot, etc.). *The pavement leading to the church entrance is marked with tape, six feet apart.*
- Develop a plan for restroom use: limit the number of people who enter a restroom at the same time, and place tape on the floor outside of the restroom to indicate where people should stand in line to wait for the restroom, while maintaining a 6-foot distance from each other. *The floor is marked leading to the restrooms with blue tape, six feet apart.*
- Singing should be discouraged in general. (Singing, especially in close proximity to others, may increase the risk of viral spread.) *Singing has been discontinued temporarily. Instrumental music only is played.*

Specific Provisions for the Parts of the Mass

The priest/deacon will follow all the protocols below.

- A priest with a respiratory infection of any kind should avoid celebrating public masses or administering sacraments during this phase. The same holds for other ministers who might serve at a Mass (deacon, servers, lectors) as well as for sacristans, ushers, etc.
- The priest celebrant and other ministers should not wear masks or gloves during the celebration of Mass. Instead, they should remain more than 6 feet from the congregation during the entirety of the Mass. In such circumstances, there is no substantial risk of infection.

(A further consideration: the Mass is imbued with powerful sacramental and liturgical symbolism. Wearing a mask and gloves would be a detrimental counter-sign in this context, and it is not warranted by considerations of hygiene if the priest remains a proper distance from the congregation.)

- To the extent possible, the other ministers (deacon, servers, lectors) should maintain a 6-foot distance from the priest and from each other, except as provided below.
- (Suggestion: The priest could place the missal on a stand at the chair or even on the altar when he recites the presidential prayers, rather than having a server hold the book.)
- Maintain a proper distance in the sacristy and during the entrance and recessional processions.
- If necessary, given the configuration of the church, consider modifying the procession's route in order to maintain a 6-foot distance from members of the congregation. *There is no procession. The priest/deacon enter from the sacristy.*
- The offertory procession (bringing up the gifts) should be omitted.
- A deacon (if present) or a server may bring the missal, chalice, paten/ciborium, and cruets of wine and water to the altar, while the priest remains at the chair. (Alternatively, the priest could do this himself.) After the deacon or server moves away, the priest could come to the altar and arrange the items on the altar.
- The lavabo should be done by the priest alone, without assistance, either at a credence table near the altar or at the side of the altar itself. After the priest returns to the center of the altar, a server could then remove the lavabo items.
- Special provision should be made for the collection -- baskets should not be passed from person to person. Long-handled baskets could be acceptable if the ushers can remain a suitable distance from others.
- (Alternative: set up central boxes or collection points where the faithful can place their contributions.) *An offertory basket is near the church entrance.*
- If hosts for the communion of the faithful are to be consecrated, the ciboria should be placed on a second corporal towards the side of the altar. This allows the priest to proffer the words of consecration directly over the host he will consume and include the other hosts on the altar but not directly in front of him as he speaks the Eucharistic prayer.
- For the elevation of the sacred species at "Through him, and with him, and in him," if a deacon is present, it is recommended that the deacon not elevate the chalice.
- The invitation to the faithful to exchange a sign of peace should be omitted unless it is clear that the 'sign' is simply a very gentle statement between congregants of "Peace be with you." *The Sign of Peace will be a nod or gentle wave to others.*

The Distribution of Holy Communion

A note on the use of gloves: Gloves are not to be used for the distribution of Holy Communion. Hand sanitizer is effective against the virus, and it is better to sanitize the hands between encounters than to wear a single pair of gloves for multiple encounters.

- Option: Mass followed by the distribution of Holy Communion, with special precautions: This is a recommended option, because it respects the symbolic and liturgical integrity of the Mass (which should be celebrated without mask), avoids any practices in the Mass that could become sources of future liturgical abuse, gives a greater freedom to the faithful to determine

whether or not they will come forward for Holy Communion (some may be nervous about doing so), and also provides for additional precautions to reduce risk. It also will permit the priest to remove his chasuble for the distribution of Holy Communion. Further it allows him to utilize a mask.

- At the start of Mass, or at a suitable point during Mass, the priest should explain that those who desire to receive Holy Communion may do so at the conclusion of the Mass. He may add that the faithful should maintain a 6-foot distance from each other as they come forward for Holy Communion.
- The Precious Blood is not to be distributed to the faithful, nor should the faithful receive the Eucharist by intinction. (A deacon or a concelebrating priest, if present, may receive by intinction.)
- A sufficient quantity of hosts for distribution to the faithful should be consecrated at the Mass.
- The priest (and, if present, the deacon) would consume the Eucharist in the normal way, but would not immediately proceed to distribute Communion to the servers or the faithful. Rather, the newly-consecrated hosts would be briefly placed in the tabernacle awaiting the conclusion of the Mass.
- After the concluding blessing and the dismissal, the priest (and deacon, if present) remain in the sanctuary. At the chair, the priest removes his chasuble and the deacon removes his dalmatic.
- A small table should be placed at each communion station, with an unfolded corporal and a bottle of hand sanitizer.
- The priest (and any other ministers distributing Holy Communion) should use hand sanitizer immediately before approaching the tabernacle. He is also to put on a surgical mask or cloth face covering.

If the priest who has celebrated the Mass is in a higher-risk group, a different priest, or additional Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EMHC), might distribute Holy Communion in his place. The EMHC should not be someone in an elderly or vulnerable category.

- Now vested in alb and stole, the priest (and deacon) retrieves the newly-consecrated hosts from the tabernacle and returns to the altar.
- Holding up a single host, he says: “Behold the Lamb of God. Behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.” He then leads the people in saying: “Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word, and my soul shall be healed.”
- The priest (and other ministers if present) proceed to the place(s) prepared for distribution of Communion. Each stands next to a table with corporal and hand sanitizer in order to distribute Communion.
- The faithful should approach, receive Holy Communion in the hand, step to the side several (6) feet, lower their mask, consume the Blessed Sacrament, replace their mask and depart.
- Holy Communion may not be distributed with gloves. The faithful are strongly encouraged NOT to approach the Communion station wearing gloves.
- Hand hygiene is effective against the virus. In these circumstances, gloves are not needed.
- If the priest senses that his fingers have touched the communicant, he should pause, place the ciborium on the corporal and use hand sanitizer. (He may also arrange for an ablution cup to be on the table and may purify his fingers in the ablution cup before using hand sanitizer.) He may repeat this process as often as he judges necessary during the distribution of Holy Communion. It

is not necessary, however, for him to use hand sanitizer between each communicant, unless he makes actual contact.

- Communion on the tongue: Opinions on this point are varied within the medical and scientific community. Some believe Communion on the tongue involves an elevated and, in the light of all the circumstances, an unreasonable risk; others disagree. With a desire to exercise an abundance of caution, Communion on the tongue is not to be offered.
- At the conclusion of the distribution of Holy Communion, the priest (and any other ministers) return the remaining hosts to the tabernacle.
- It is recommended that the faithful not return to their pews following the reception of Holy Communion. Exiting immediately minimizes crowd interaction. A prayer of thanksgiving can be made outside. *All the above protocols will be followed.*

IF THERE ARE FAITHFUL ASSEMBLED IN THE PARKING LOT, for whom sound from the Church should be provided, Holy Communion may be distributed to them as well.
Not applicable or available at Holy Spirit Church

- It is recommended that the faithful bring their own chairs and sit in front of their car maintaining proper distance between cars. Family groups may assemble together.
- Recommended Option: If sufficient EMHC are available, they could receive Holy Communion, as described above, at the usual time for Holy Communion and then proceed to the outside to distribute to any who have gathered there. The EMHC are to position themselves in pre-arranged locations around the parking lot where people may approach in an orderly and properly distanced fashion to receive Holy Communion. Those who receive outside could then move immediately to their cars and depart.
- Secondary Option: After Mass and after distribution of Holy Communion in the Church (or if sufficient EMHC are available, simultaneously with distribution in the Church), the ministers of Holy Communion are to position themselves in pre-arranged locations around the parking lot where people may approach in an orderly and properly distanced fashion to receive Holy Communion. Those who receive outside could then move immediately to their cars and depart.
- As with distribution in the Church each Communion station should have a corporal and a sanitizing product available.
- Holy Communion is not to be distributed to persons who remain in their cars unless there is a case of a disability.
- Holy Communion is not to be placed in a pyx for people to bring to others who may have remained at home. Special arrangements can be made for those who are chronically shut-in who are used to receiving Holy Communion in their homes.

SANITIZING BETWEEN MASSES: This is a very critical portion of our readiness to open for public worship.

The following norms should be observed in our churches and other public spaces.

- When in doubt, err on the side of caution.
- Baptismal fonts and holy water stoups should remain empty.
- Water for baptism is to be changed and blessed before each baptism. As always, blessed water should be properly disposed of in the ground.

- Vessels should continue to be washed after each Mass in hot soapy water.
- All liturgical vestments, including server albs, are to be regularly cleaned.
- High use areas within the church should be wiped down with disinfectant before and after each liturgy. This will include pews, chairs, and ambos.
- Greater attention needs to be paid to frequently and communally touched surfaces, such as hand rails, door handles, push plates, and knobs. These must be wiped down after each liturgy or even more frequently, for example after the Mass has begun and then again between Masses.
(Doors might be propped open to lessen contact.)
- Restroom facilities must be sanitized after each liturgy. More frequent sanitation is recommended, for example after the Mass has begun, half way through Mass, if the facility has been used and then again between Masses.

- The liturgical environment should be considered, too. Reflect the liturgical season, but keep all decorations at a minimum (fewer surfaces to clean or attract germs).
- All hymnals and missalettes (and other items) should be removed from the pews and stored for the duration of the pandemic. *All hymnals and literature removed.*
- Single use, disposable worship aids (bulletins) could be distributed, then taken home or discarded. *Bulletins are available on-line or can be emailed/mailed.*
- Alternately, the use of digital projection and screens is a possibility. As always, appropriate copyright licenses are to be respected.

Volunteer cleaning crews, wearing masks and gloves, use disinfectant sprays on pews, kneelers, chairs, restrooms and high-touch surfaces after each Mass. Cleaning towels are placed in a plastic bag and washed with bleach.

PLAN AHEAD:

- Assure that there is a sufficient supply of hand sanitizers and cleaning supplies in stock.
- Properly and thoroughly train staff and volunteers to assure that they know their responsibilities, especially regarding sanitation.
- As one emergency room doctor put it, “If you can’t take this seriously, stay closed.” SAFETY AND HYGIENE: THE DUTY OF EVERY INDIVIDUAL
- Those who are sick or symptomatic should stay home!
- Wash hands at home and use hand sanitizer upon entering the church.
- Face masks should be mandated for all assembly members over the age of two.

PREPAREDNESS CHECKLIST FOR IN-HOUSE RELIGIOUS SERVICES

✚ COPY of the Guidelines on Re-Opening Catholic Churches for Mass is Distributed to EVERY Volunteer (This constitutes Training) *A copy of this tailored plan was distributed to volunteers employees in June 2020*

Document and retain a list of all volunteers for each Mass *A sign-in sheet for all volunteers at each Mass is located near the church entrance and will be maintained in the sacristy.*

- ✝ Church is configured for proper social distancing *Pews limited to three per pew, or two couples, every other pew; chairs spaced six feet apart. Larger family groups can sit in the side pews, every other pew. Wheel chair space is available.*
 - ✝ Church has been disinfected *A cleaning company thoroughly disinfects the church each week.*
 - ✝ Proper and necessary signage regarding criteria for entry are clearly posted *The CDC posters "Stop the Spread of Germs", "COVID-19 Symptoms" are posted at the church door*
 - ✝ Communion stations are set up and equipped with sanitizer. *Hand sanitizer is available at the entrance to church.*
 - ✝ Outdoor Communion stations are set up and ready to be properly equipped *Not applicable*
 - ✝ All Volunteers, especially Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion have appropriate masks and have verified that they do not have a fever, cough, shortness of breath, recent symptoms of COVID, recent contact with COVID infected person. *All attendees have masks, submit to a temperature check and verbally confirm they do not have COVID symptoms.*
 - ✝ Proper mechanism for receiving donations is in place. *A basket for donations is placed near the church entrance door.*
 - ✝ Sanitizing volunteers are ready and available throughout Mass.
 - ✝ Suitable outdoor volunteers are available to monitor entry into the Church and the observance of proper protocols outside *Screeners volunteers and ushers are posted at the church entrance to ensure proper protocols.*
 - ✝ Outdoor volunteers are instructed about how people outside are to advance to the established Communion Stations to receive Holy Communion *The pastor instructs the attendees on the protocol to receive Holy Communion during Mass.*
 - ✝ Interior Ushers are instructed about how people are to be seated and how they are to advance for Holy Communion *Ushers explain where there is available seating and the pastor explains how the attendees are to receive Holy Communion.*
 - ✝ OTHER Local items as determined by the Pastor
-