



Catholic Diocese of Victoria
Office of the Bishop

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May 21, 2020

**LITURGICAL DIRECTIVES for the Celebration of Mass
and the Sacraments during Covid-19**

Dear Pastors, Administrators, Deacons, and People of God,

As we are called to embrace a new Pentecost and prepare our faith communities to reopen to celebrate the Sacred Liturgy together on May 30, 2020, we do so intentionally to guarantee the health and well-being of those entrusted to our care. Each parish must take responsibility for following the established *Diocesan Guidelines, Liturgical Directives*, and Provincial Health Authorities mandates, to make the appropriate adaptations for their individual communities based upon size and resources.

CELEBRATION OF THE MASS:

1. ALTAR SERVERS:

As we begin to open our churches for public Masses, the priest will celebrate the Mass without the assistance of Altar Servers.

2. ROLE OF THE DEACON:

Provided the deacon is healthy and comfortable to exercise his diaconal role at Mass, he would function as a Deacon of the Word (not of the Eucharist), while maintaining social distancing. The deacon would not set up the altar. For Communion, if the deacon receives from the Chalice, a second chalice is to be used, and the deacon would purify his own chalice but not the celebrant's chalice.

3. LECTORS:

Only one Lector should be assigned for all the readings to minimize the physical contact with the book (s) as well as breathing upon the sound system, which might then be touched by others.

4. MISSALETTES AND MISSALS:

The Church will not provide missalettes for the use of parishioners; however, parishioners are free to bring their own.

5. **MUSIC:**

Music should be limited to a cantor and an accompanist, with no choir. Robust congregational singing should be discouraged as it has proven to contribute to the spread of germs. The words to the music should not be printed or displayed on a screen. No printed song sheets or hymnals should be provided at this time.

6. **OFFERTORY PROCESSION:**

Gifts are to be prepared at the Credence Table / Altar ahead of time. Parishioners are not to put their hosts into a ciborium directly. There is to be no procession of the gifts.

7. **COMMUNION HOSTS FOR THE ASSEMBLY:**

Communion Hosts are to be prepared ahead of time and when placed upon the altar for the consecration should be placed at some distance from the celebrant so there is no danger of him breathing upon them and should remain covered. The priest is not to share his Host with anyone.

8. **REFRAIN FROM BREATHING UPON THE BREAD AND THE WINE:**

If this is their custom, priests are to refrain from breathing over the bread and wine for the consecration.

9. **KISS OF PEACE:**

The rules of social distancing must be respected and parishioners are to be reminded to not shake hands, or hug each other, unless they are sitting together as a family unit. Parishioners may be invited to bow or extend another gesture of peace to one another.

10. **COMMUNION:**

As there will be a small number of parishioners (below 50), only the priest/presider will distribute Communion, which will be distributed on the **hand only**. The priest/presider is to use hand sanitizer after receiving his own Communion and prior to the distribution to others. Hand sanitizer is to be utilized at the end of the distribution of communion, and any time the fingers of the priest/presider touch the hand of a communicant.

The priest/presider will stand behind a clear Plexiglas screen (provided to all the parishes by the Diocese) which will need to be installed on a table at the front of the aisle for the parishioners to present their hands for communion.

All parishioners will be invited to come forward at Communion in single file, while maintaining social distancing guides provided on the floor. Those who do not receive communion and desire a blessing are welcome to come forward, as one does for communion. The priest/presider must not touch the individuals and maintain the safe distance rule of 2 meters.

11. RECEIVING COMMUNION if a person cannot extend their hands:

A physically challenged or handicapped person might not be able to extend their hands and therefore common sense and pastoral discretion is required.

12. TIMING OF COMMUNION:

The priest/presider has two options for the distribution of communion. The first option would be that Communion would be distributed in the context of Mass as per the norm and parishioners would have an opportunity to make an act of thanksgiving and participate in the act of sending forth at the end of the Liturgy. The departure from the Mass could be handled safely by having people exit row by row. The second option is that parishioners could receive Communion at the end of Mass and then leave the Church, thus providing for an orderly and safe exit.

SACRAMENTS:

13. SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM:

Priests / Deacons / Administrators may baptize all the while maintaining social distancing and other safety measures. Occasionally, during the ritual, it is necessary to approach the child and the Celebrant should ask the parents if they are comfortable having them approach without a mask or if they wish a mask to be worn for the following: signing of the child; anointing with oil of Catechumens; pouring of water; anointing with Chrism; giving of the candle. The signing and anointing is to be done with a cotton ball. The parents sign the child and only those others that the parents permit to sign the child.

14. RECONCILIATION:

As per the norms already established, provided social distancing and all the necessary precautions for sanitization are in place. Confessional boxes and Reconciliation rooms are too small for social distancing and therefore a larger room or area of the church with clear visibility (in conformity with the norms established for Responsible Ministry and Safe Environment) or outside in an open space. The penitent should stand unless kneelers and/or chairs are properly sanitized after each person. Social distancing markers for those waiting for the sacrament of reconciliation must be clearly indicated.

15. CONFIRMATION – of those who desire to enter the church after RCIA:

Confirmation may be conferred provided social distancing and all precautions, including sanitizing take place. The Celebrant should ask the candidate if they are comfortable having them approach without a mask or if they wish a mask to be worn.

16. CONFIRMATION AND FIRST COMMUNION:

Priests may be delegated by the Bishop to celebrate Confirmation and First Communion, provided the Restored Order of the Sacraments is maintained. If someone wishes to await the presence of the Bishop next year, then they must wait for both sacraments. The celebration of Confirmation and First Communion may take place within a Mass provided the necessary protocols are followed.

17. WEDDING:

As per the norms already established in the Diocese for the celebration of the wedding in the church. Small groups are preferable, less than 50 people is required, social distancing and other protocols to be followed. Receptions in the church hall are not permitted at this time.

18. SACRAMENT OF THE SICK:

As per the norms already established in the Diocese for Anointing and the Sacrament of the Sick.

19. FUNERALS:

As per the norms already established in the Diocese for the celebration of a funeral in the church. Small groups are preferable, less than 50 people is required, social distancing and other protocols to be followed. Receptions in the church hall are not permitted at this time.

Thank you for your solicitude, prayers, and faithful example in service to all the people in our Diocese.

In Communion,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Gary Gordon", with a small cross symbol to the left.

Most Reverend Gary Gordon
Bishop of Victoria

GG/cb