



Catholic Diocese of Victoria
Office of the Bishop

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June 2, 2021

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

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

Our churches prepare with joy to reopen to celebrate the Sacred Liturgy together.

Though some restrictions have been relaxed, we must continue to stay vigilant with infection prevention, modelling and monitoring good behaviour, and following strict protocols regarding cleaning and sanitization. The regulations detailed in the variance for indoor worship services dated May 26, 2021, including the limit of all public gatherings for Mass to no more than 50 people, social distancing, **and mandatory face covering use**, must be respected during this time:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/health/about-bc-s-health-care-system/office-of-the-provincial-health-officer/covid-19/covid-19-variance-indoor-worship.pdf>

In addition, all Catholics are encouraged to follow the example of Pope Francis, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI and Bishop Gary and receive the Covid-19 vaccine when it is offered; widespread vaccination is our path to restriction-free liturgical gatherings, activities, and visits.

Each parish must take responsibility for following the *Restart Diocesan Directives* and *Liturgical Directives*, and make the appropriate adaptations for their individual communities based upon size and available resources.

CELEBRATION OF THE MASS:

1. **FACE COVERINGS:**

In accordance with the Province's "Face Coverings (COVID-19) Order" (https://www.bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/mo/mo/m0012_2021), face coverings as defined in the Order must be worn by all people at all times while inside the church building. The only allowable exemptions from the use of a face covering are those given in the Order, and those in the relevant sections below.

2. **CELEBRANT:**

The priest/presider may remove their face covering when speaking, singing or chanting if there is either a 3 m separation between the priest/presider and all other people in the church, or a physical barrier between them and all other people in the church which blocks the transmission of droplets.

3. **ALTAR SERVERS:**

The priest/presider will celebrate the Mass without the assistance of Altar Servers.

4. **ROLE OF THE DEACON:**

Provided the deacon is healthy and comfortable to exercise his diaconal role at Mass, he may function as a Deacon of the Word (not of the Eucharist), while maintaining physical distancing. The deacon may not set up the altar. For Communion, if the deacon receives from the Chalice, a second chalice is to be used, and the deacon must purify his own chalice, and not the celebrant's chalice. *Deacons may remove their face covering when speaking, singing or chanting if there is either a 3 m separation between them and all other people in the church, or a physical barrier between them and all other people in the church which blocks the transmission of droplets.*

5. **LECTORS:**

Only one Lector should be assigned for all the readings to reduce physical handling of the book(s) as well as breathing upon the sound system. *Lectors may remove their face covering when proclaiming if there is either a 3 m separation between them and all other people in the church, or a physical barrier between them and all other people in the church which blocks the transmission of droplets.*

6. **MISSALETTES AND MISSALS:**

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

7. **MUSIC:**

Congregational singing is **NOT PERMITTED** as it has proven to contribute to the spread of the virus. Music will therefore be limited to a cantor and an accompanist, with no choir. The music provided must only consist of a Processional, Communion, and Recessional Hymn.

Cantors may remove their face covering when singing if there is either a 3 m separation between them and all other people in the church, or a physical barrier between them and all other people in the church which blocks the transmission of droplets.

If accompanists must remove their face covering in order to play their instrument, they may do so when playing if there is either a 3 m separation between them and all other people in the church, or a physical barrier between them and all other people in the church which blocks the transmission of droplets.

The Acclamations (i.e. Kyrie, Gloria, Responsorial Psalm, Gospel Alleluia, Holy Holy, Lamb of God, etc.) are not to be chanted or sung by the Presider, cantor, nor the congregation. The words to the music should not be printed or displayed on a screen. Parishioners are encouraged to participate prayerfully, consciously, and actively in the Liturgy (cf#14 Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy).

8. **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.

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

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

10. **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.

11. **KISS OF PEACE:**

Physical distancing must be respected and parishioners are to be reminded not to shake hands or hug each other, unless they are sitting together as a family unit. Though the Roman Missal provides an option of omitting the sign of peace, *continuing the sign of peace with a gesture, such as bowing, is recommended.*

12. **COMMUNION:**

As there is a small congregation for each Mass (maximum 50), only the priest/presider will distribute Communion, which will be distributed on the **hand only**. The priest/presider is to apply hand sanitizer after receiving his own Communion and prior to distributing to others. Hand sanitizer is to be reapplied at the end of the distribution of Communion, and at any time if 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 was to be installed on a table at the front of the aisle and through which parishioners may present their hands to receive Communion.

All parishioners will be invited to come forward at Communion in single file, following social distancing markers provided on the floor. Those who do not receive Communion and desire a blessing are welcome to come forward as well, following the same single-file flow. When distributing Communion or giving a blessing, the priest/presider must not touch individuals and maintain the safe distance rule of 2 meters.

Parishioners must wear face coverings until they reach the Plexiglas screen. After receiving the host, they must replace their face coverings before stepping away from the screen.

13. USE OF PARISH HALL:

If a parish has a hall that has its own separate entrance and exit, the parish may use this space to offer additional seating for those who wish to attend a Mass via a live video-feed and projector system. This is possible provided:

- a) There are separate entrances, exits, and washroom facilities for the church and the hall;
- b) The total number of parishioners present in either space does not exceed 50 people or the maximum occupancy permitted according to size and space;
- c) Parishioners participating in the Mass via live video-feed do not have contact with parishioners attending the Mass in person before, during or after Mass

If a hall is used to accommodate another distinct group, the congregation gathered in the hall will wait until the end of Mass to receive Communion from the priest/presider. Plexiglas must be installed near the exit door, along with appropriate physical distancing decals and maximum occupancy signage. The priest will distribute Communion to those gathered as they exit.

The rules for face covering use in the hall are identical to those in the church.

14. TIMING OF COMMUNION:

Provided that only the main church is used for the celebration of the Mass, the priest/presider has two options for the distribution of Communion. The first option is that Communion is 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 sending forth at the end of the Liturgy. The departure from the Mass may then be organized by having people exit row by row. The second option is that parishioners receive Communion at the end of Mass and then leave the church. **Observation of these two options suggests that the second is preferred, as it reduces crowding and therefore allows for a safer exit of people from the church.**

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

A person with physical challenges or disabilities might not be able to extend their hands and therefore common sense and pastoral discretion is required.

SACRAMENTS:

All rules for face covering use during the Celebration of the Mass must be followed during the celebration of Sacraments.

16. **SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM:**

Attendance at Baptisms must be limited to 10 people including the Presider.

Priests / Deacons / Administrators may baptize all the while maintaining physical distancing and other safety measures. During the ritual, it is occasionally necessary to approach the child, ***and at these times the Celebrant must wear a face covering.*** This applies to the following acts: signing of the child; anointing with oil of Catechumens; pouring of water; anointing with Chrism; and gifting of the candle. The signing and anointing is to be done with a cotton ball.

17. **RECONCILIATION:**

Physical distancing and all necessary precautions for sanitization must be respected. Because Confessional boxes and reconciliation rooms are often too small to respect physical distancing, 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, may be used. The penitent should stand unless kneelers and/or chairs are properly sanitized after each person. Physical distancing markers for those waiting for the Sacrament of Reconciliation must be clearly indicated.

18. **CONFIRMATION:**

Confirmation may be conferred provided physical distancing and all precautions, including sanitizing, take place. ***The Celebrant must wear a face covering when they approach the candidate.*** The signing and anointing is to be done with a cotton ball. *“The use by the minister of an instrument (gloves, cotton swab...), does not affect the validity of the Sacrament” (Congregation for Divine Worship & the Discipline of the Sacraments, issued October 1, 2020).*

19. **CONFIRMATION AND FIRST COMMUNION:**

Priests are delegated by the Bishop to celebrate Confirmation and First Communion until Covid-19 is over and provided the Restored Order of the Sacraments is maintained.

20. **WEDDING:**

Attendance at Weddings must be limited to 10 people including the Presider.

Receptions and banquets in the church hall are still not permitted at this time.

21. **SACRAMENT OF THE SICK:**

As per the norms already established in the Diocese for Anointing and the Sacrament of the Sick. (*Memo dated April 15, 2020*)

22. **FUNERALS:**

Attendance at Funerals must be limited to 10 people including the Presider.

Receptions and banquets in the church hall are still not permitted at this time.

Thank you for your on-going prayers, support, and faithful example of service to the people of God in our Diocese.

In Communion,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Gary Gordon", preceded by a small cross symbol.

Most Reverend Gary Gordon
Bishop of Victoria