

Office of Worship

Diocese of Honolulu

Memorandum

TO: Clergy, Parishes and the Faithful

FROM: Deacon Modesto Cordero, Director
Office of Worship

DATE: May 8, 2020

RE: Directives and guidance in preparation for the reopening of churches and the resumption of public Masses

“Man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.” (Matthew 4:4)

General Principles

The following directives are given to provide guidance on how to prepare for the reopening of our churches for public Masses and other liturgies or devotions. Pastors, administrators and staff are obliged to follow these directives as well as to continue enforcing all legitimate state requirements with regard the safety and health of our parishioners and those whom we may encounter. This will assure consistent practice throughout our diocese. Moreover, this makes clear that any variation from normal liturgical practice will be temporary.

These are not normal times and our number one priority is the health and safety as well as the spiritual care of our parishioners, volunteers and staff. We do understand that many are eager to return to Mass in our churches, however we need to take into consideration those most vulnerable members of our communities, including the elderly and those with chronic illnesses. **The continuation of live-streamed Masses is highly recommended as a benefit to those who are homebound, sick, or otherwise vulnerable.**

Bishop Larry Silva will be extending the dispensation from the obligation to attend Mass on Sunday through June 30, 2020 for all the faithful. Thus, when our churches are open for Mass, no one is obliged to attend until further notice. Those who are symptomatic or who have been exposed to another person with the virus are not permitted to attend church services until they are cleared by their doctor. Those at risk because of an underlying health issue are strongly encouraged to avoid the risk of attending public celebrations of the Mass.

Understandably, everyone is anxious to return to normalcy. But the threat of the coronavirus is still very much with us. Social distancing, the wearing of masks (with the exception of very small children) and increased cleaning procedures will be important at this time. Pastors and staff need to start planning and acquiring enough supplies for their parishes.

These DIRECTIVES are items that should be followed for the safe celebration of Mass. Each venue, however, will need to make prudential decisions about its particulars, as long as the general principles of social distancing and minimization of contact are intact.

Building Readiness

- Each pastor, with the assistance of the staff, needs to calculate the number of people his church/mission can accommodate for Mass while observing six-foot social distancing between all participants. With the exception of parents with small children, it is even suggested that adults and older children who share the same household also observe social distancing in the church in order to avoid confusion.
- Space on an adjoining lanai from which the Mass can be seen and heard can be added into the count, but not space in any buildings from which the Mass cannot be seen and heard. However, if you can live-stream the Mass to your parish hall (and/or school gym) you might want to add to your count how many people you can safely accommodate observing the six-foot social distancing in the hall (and/or gym).
- “Cry Rooms” should be closed and locked. Those parishioners who utilize these spaces for families with small children should be informed that these rooms are not available.
- Develop a plan for the sanitizing/disinfecting of highly touched surfaces before and after each Mass (including restrooms). This will include acquiring supplies, which are currently in high demand.
- Determine ingress/egress to and from restrooms to establish paths that mitigate proximity for parishioners.
- Hand sanitizer is to be made available throughout the church, whenever possible.
- All hymnals and missalettes are to be removed from the pews and stored for the duration of the pandemic. No other materials may be left in the pews. The faithful are encouraged to bring their own missals for use during the celebration of Mass, if desired. Or disposable worship aids could be distributed, then discarded. Perhaps the use of familiar melodies and texts will be best at this time. Use familiar Mass settings. **Alternately, the use of digital projection and screens is encouraged.** As always, appropriate copyright licenses are to be respected.
- Design a process so parishioners stay separated while waiting for check in and seating. Do not allow them to congregate in the entrance of the church. This process can include floor markings, outdoor distancing, waiting in cars, etc.
- Physical barriers are acceptable where practical, especially in additional church entrances/exits (maintaining the fire department codes and unblocked emergency exits).
- Furniture in the sanctuary should be arranged in such a way that social distancing between ministers is maintained.

- Consider placing a stand near the presider's chair to hold the Roman Missal. This eliminates the need for the server to stand so close to the presider when he prays the Collect and other Mass prayers.
- The location of the stations for the distribution of Holy Communion and appropriate spacing between individuals in the Communion procession should be prepared, perhaps utilizing tape on the floor or guides on the ends of the pews.
- Baptismal fonts and holy water stoops should remain empty until further notice.
- Post signage at the entrances of the church stating no one with a fever or symptoms of COVID-19 may enter.

Mass Participation and Attendance

- Each pastor will determine the number of Masses he can reasonably celebrate on Saturday night and on Sunday, our principal times of worship. The regular schedule might work, but since fewer people will be allowed into the church, he should consider more than one Saturday vigil Mass (any time after 4:00 p.m.) and perhaps additional Sunday morning, afternoon, or evening Masses. The number of priests available in the parish will also determine the number of Masses. Since these are unusual circumstances, a priest may celebrate three Masses a day.
- Pastors are asked to determine how many Masses they can offer on weekdays in order to accommodate those who are not able to attend Saturday evening/Sunday Masses but who still long for the Eucharist. A possibility is to offer at least two daily Masses (morning, noontime and/or evening).
- Devise a means of ticketing (e.g. like using an online system such as Eventbrite, Eventbee, or printing your own tickets at the church with each ticket specifying a particular date and Mass time) so that the parish will make available for each particular service only the number of tickets corresponding to the capacity of the church while observing social distancing. Only those with a ticket for a particular Mass will be allowed to attend that Mass. Others may obtain a ticket for a different Mass. Perhaps limiting one ticket for person per week may be considered in order to accommodate more people. Remember that liturgical ministers are part of the Mass count. Think through what is the best method for ticket distribution in your parish. **[NOTE: Do not print or distribute tickets until permission is granted to re-open the church for Masses. This is a planning phase only, so that we will be ready when reopening is permitted.]**
- Those who normally attend daily Mass should be asked to attend only once in a week, IF other parishioners want to attend one day. If it turns out that there is no great demand for daily Masses, then, of course the regulars can be accommodated, as long as social distancing is maintained.
- Ushers will have to be trained to not allow anyone without a ticket to enter the church. Moreover, they should anticipate the need to gently deal with some chaos and fear for the first few weeks. They are not there to “police,” but some rules might put the people at ease.

- Ushers and other volunteers are to wear masks and are to frequently wash or sanitize their hands. Educate all liturgical ministers so that they, in turn, can model good practices.
- People will sit in places assigned by an usher and not necessarily in their usual “favorite” spot.

Liturgical restrictions (for the time being)

- Clergy and other ministers are to maintain six-foot distancing and should not greet parishioners as they enter or exit the church.
- People entering the church and during the celebration of Mass will wear a mask (or other face covering). Only the priest, deacon and those in the sanctuary will not wear masks. However, at the time for receiving Communion, the priest, deacon and the minimal number of extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion needed to assist will put on masks, while the people approaching for Holy Communion will momentarily remove their masks, then replace them once the sacred host has been consumed.
- Music ministers, including small choirs and ensembles (5 people maximum), should also adhere to social distancing. Large choirs should be discontinued until it is safe to resume.
- Priests should make every effort to clearly communicate good hygienic practices and liturgical alterations to their parishioners in light of continuing public health concerns.
- Processions through the assembly at the beginning and end of the Mass should be re-examined or discontinued.
- The gifts of bread and wine may simply be brought to the altar from the credence table in the sanctuary, thus eliminating one more possibility of close contact.
- Collection baskets will not be passed, but people will either go in a distanced procession to place their offering in a basket in front of the altar; or they can place their offerings in a locked box as they enter the church. This box will be under the custody of two trustworthy people at all times.
- The exchange of the Sign of Peace will be only by distanced gestures such as a bow, a wave of the hand, or a smile.
- During the Mass, the people will only receive the Holy Communion under the form of Bread. For those who are gluten intolerant, special arrangements are to be made with the pastor. It is encouraged that communicants received Communion by hand. Communion by tongue is not prohibited. A reminder to communicants on the proper way to receive Holy Communion by hand could be helpful at this time. [Upon approaching the minister extend the hands in the middle of the chest. One hand is extended, while the other hand is placed beneath it and opened sufficiently so that the minister need not touch the hand to place the sacred host in it.]

- If there are priest-concelebrants, the principal celebrant and concelebrating priests are to receive Holy Communion by intinction, utilizing the main chalice, and with the last priest consuming all that remains in the chalice, then purifying it. Deacons will receive Holy Communion under the form of Bread only.
- The priests, deacons and anyone assisting in the distribution of Communion will sanitize their hands just before and just after distribution of Communion. If they feel their hands are contaminated during Communion, they may pause and sanitize their hands before resuming.
- After the Mass all should depart the church in an organized manner wearing masks and observing six feet of distance between other parishioners. Ushers may need to direct this process.
- Ushers are not to hand out bulletins or other materials. People should be directed to the parish website to read the weekly bulletin for information.
- There will be no post-Mass fellowship until further notice. No ministry tables with resources are allowed in the vestibule or lanai areas.
- Weddings, funerals, and Confirmations/First Holy Communion could take place with careful attention to guest lists so as to keep under the person limit and physical distancing plans for each church.

Cleaning Protocols

- Appropriate cleaning of high use areas within the church is to be done before and after each service. This will include pews, chairs, ambo and microphones.
- Restroom facilities should be sanitized after each liturgy and regularly.
- Hand rails, door handles, push plates, and knobs are to be sanitized after each service. Doors might be propped open to lessen contact.
- Vessels used during the Mass should continue to be washed after each Mass in soap and water – as they always should be, even in normal circumstances.
- All liturgical vestments, including server albs, are to be regularly cleaned.
- Minimize the amount of clergy and liturgical ministers inside the sacristy at one time to maintain the proper social distancing.
- The liturgical environment should be considered, too. Reflect the liturgical season, but keep all decorations at a minimum (less surface to clean or attract germs).