

OFFICE OF WORSHIP

MEMORANDUM

Date: March 18, 2020
To: All Clergy of the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis
From: Very Reverend Tom Margevičius, Director, Office of Worship
Re: Liturgical Procedures During the Coronavirus Pandemic

As the entire world is undergoing the Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic, Catholics join those working to minimize its impact. Archdiocesan leaders are working hard to keep up with this rapidly changing situation. A decision that may have been prudent yesterday may need to be updated tomorrow, and I thank you for your patience, support, and input to help us do what is best for everyone.

Let us especially stay fervent in prayer, not only privately, but also when giving pastoral care to the faithful in the limited ways described below. Ordained ministers are spiritual “first responders” in crises, and we must be attentive to the needs of our faithful, even while taking every precaution for our own health and that of others.

These procedures go into effect immediately.

I. General Precautions

- If you are feeling sick (cough, fever, flu), stay at home and suspend all contact with all the faithful until you are healed. Follow guidelines from civil authorities on whether you should quarantine yourself for 14 days.
- If you are considered high-risk you are particularly urged to follow strictly all these precautions, even if it means you must greatly limit your physical ministry among the faithful.
- Thoroughly wash your hands with soap and hot water for at least 20 seconds (the time it takes to pray an Our Father) before and after every meal, before leaving the restroom, and at other regular intervals throughout the day.
- Avoid touching your face (the virus enters via eye, nose, and mouth tissue).
- Cover every cough or sneeze with a disposable tissue or your shirt sleeve.
- Maintain a minimum of 6 feet of social distance between persons.
- Do not gather in groups of more than 10 persons.
- Stay out of public places frequented by many people.
- When public presence is necessary (e.g. private home visits, buying groceries or pharmaceuticals), as much as possible avoid touching other people, door handles, countertops, etc.

II. Keeping Churches Open

- Churches may remain unlocked for private prayer ONLY if you have maintenance staff trained and available to sanitize surfaces—door handles, railings, bathroom fixtures, ends of pews, etc.—every day, preferably multiple times daily. You may publicize on your website the hours the church will be open.
- Allow NO public gatherings or meetings of more than 10 persons, regularly scheduled or otherwise.
- Sanitize and temporarily remove from public handling all hymnals, childcare toys, pew comment cards, literature in the back, etc.
- Perpetual Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament may continue ONLY if the anticipated number of adorers is fewer than 10 and they are able to maintain a distance of at least 6 feet between them. This may require relocating Adoration into the main church instead of a tightly cramped chapel.

III. Celebration of Mass

- As directed by the Archbishop, suspend ALL regularly scheduled public Masses, weekday and Sunday, until further notice. That decision will be reviewed in two weeks.
- All priests are asked to continue to celebrate daily Mass. For Masses concelebrated with another priest or the assistance of a deacon or another person to make the responses, use the “Mass with the Participation of a Single Minister” from *The Roman Missal*.
- The liturgical texts in Lent are timely. Nevertheless, during this pandemic, on any day listed as V1 in the ordo, the Archbishop grants all priests permission to pray instead the Mass “For the Sick,” n. 45 in the *Roman Missal’s* Masses for Various Needs and Occasions. You may also use the *Collection of Masses of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, vol. 1 (Missal), n. 44 (“The Blessed Virgin Mary, Health of the Sick”), n. 11 (“The Blessed Virgin Mary at the Foot of the Cross I”), and n. 12 (“The Blessed Virgin Mary at the Foot of the Cross II”).
- Continue to be extra careful not to have physical contact with any assisting minister, either by exchanging peace or when distributing communion.
- Priests may celebrate Mass alone (with no one else in attendance) “for a just and reasonable cause” (can. 906); this pandemic certainly constitutes such a cause. Be mindful, however, that on Holy Thursday, “all Masses without the participation of [at least one of] the people are forbidden” (*Paschale solemnitas* 47).
- Priests are encouraged to record electronically or livestream Masses on your parish website, informing parishioners how they can view them. If you do broadcast any liturgy, notify the Archdiocesan Communications office (communications@archspm.org) of your website’s URL, and follow the USCCB guidelines on broadcasting liturgy <http://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/the-mass/frequently-asked-questions/guidelines-for-televising-the-liturgy.cfm>.

- Pastors must continue to offer Mass for the People (*Missa pro populo*) each Sunday and Holy Day of Obligation. Other Mass intentions may not be added, and no Mass offering may be applied to this Mass.
- You may have accepted more Mass stipends than you can fulfill by celebrating only one daily Mass. In such cases, a priest may celebrate up to two Masses on a weekday and three on a Sunday or other Holy Day, but only for just cause or where pastoral necessity demands it.
- If there are still more stipends than you can fulfill, you may combine in one Mass several intentions for which a financial offering has been accepted, but only under the following circumstances:
 - Donors must be informed of and consent to the combining of their offerings before such a Mass is celebrated;
 - The place and location of the Mass is to be made known to the donors;
 - There are to be no more than two such Masses per week per celebrant; and
 - The parish, institution, or priest may keep the customary offering for only one Mass. The remaining stipends must be sent to the Archdiocesan Office of Worship, to be applied to a fund designated by the Archbishop.
- Intentions for which no financial offering has been accepted may be combined and offered at a single Mass.
- The liturgies of Holy Week (Palm Sunday, Chrism Mass, the Triduum, Easter) fall outside the two-week period; decisions about those liturgies will be made as the situation becomes clearer during the next couple of weeks.

IV. Holy Communion to the Sick and Homebound

- Priests or deacons at high risk are to refrain from taking communion to the sick.
- All other clergy should use extreme caution and follow directives above.
- Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are not permitted to take Holy Communion to the sick during this crisis for their good and the good of their families.
- Contact any health care facility before visiting and follow their directives regarding personal hygiene (washing hands, etc.).
- Most nursing facilities are under quarantine. Contact the staff before planning a visit and follow their directives when attending to the sick and dying. When possible, delay visiting until the pandemic passes to limit endangering this vulnerable population.

- If visiting persons' private homes:
 - Wash hands using soap and hot water upon entering the home.
 - Do not touch surfaces or place your personal effects on any adjacent surfaces.
 - Avoid unnecessary physical contact with all persons.
 - Use a hand sanitizer before distributing Communion.
 - Encourage reception of Communion in the hand, and avoid touching the communicant.
 - Wash your hands after the visit.

V. Sacrament of Reconciliation

- Do not hold any indoor Form II Penance Services (communal liturgy with private confession). You may employ creative ways such as drive-up confession stations in an open-air Church parking lot, but always keeping guidelines of the 6-foot minimum space and fewer than 10 persons congregating together.
- Continue to celebrate Form I (private) confessions as long as you are able to maintain the social distance standards: fewer than 10 persons together at any one time, 6-foot distance from the priest and between penitents in line, etc.
- If face-to-face confessions are too close, penitents should be behind a screen. It would be prudent to cover the grille with plastic to avoid exchange of any respiratory particles.
- The Sacrament of Reconciliation may never be celebrated via electronic means (telephone, video calls, emails or texts, etc.).

VI. Anointing of the Sick

- Follow the strictest social distance guidelines for this vulnerable population.
- Check with the hospital or institution before visiting to ensure all restrictions are followed.
- Be sure not to touch any surfaces, nor set down your sick call kit or book. If the medical staff requires it, wear protective clothing: gowns, masks, booties, surgical gloves, etc. These will all be removed after visiting the patient and safely disposed of by the institution.
- Use a sterile, unused cotton ball for each anointing.
 - Dip it into the oil only once.
 - Apply the oil only once, saying the sacramental formula.

- Do not re-dip the cotton ball back into the oil. Discard the cotton into a sealable plastic baggie, which you should later safely dispose of by burning.
- While you could not validly anoint without oil touching the body, you could, if necessary, grant sacramental absolution and the apostolic pardon from outside a patient's room.

VII. Funerals

- The Minnesota Funeral Directors Association has issued guidelines for the celebration of funerals, which are available at www.mnfuneral.org.
- If possible, funerals should be suspended until after public Masses resume; this is easier in the case of cremation, but not all funeral homes have sufficient storage for many bodies.
- Bodies properly embalmed are not at risk of spreading the coronavirus, which is usually transmitted by respiratory droplets.
- If a funeral must occur, keep social distancing guidelines in place: 6 feet, maximum of 10 attendees, etc. Perhaps the liturgy can be livestreamed or recorded for those not in attendance.
- Cemetery chapels and mausoleums will be closed except for interments or inurnments, but visits to gravesides are permitted, again maintaining social distancing.

VIII. Weddings

- Maintain social distancing (10 person maximum, 6 feet apart, no physical contact).
- Perhaps a small, sacramental ceremony could be celebrated now, and large formal receptions rescheduled for after the pandemic has passed (banquet halls similarly cannot have large groups during the pandemic).

IX. Other Services

- To the extent possible, **Baptisms** should be delayed until further notice. In danger of death, administer baptism as soon as possible, preferably at the parish church, unless this is not possible (urgent time constraints, inability to travel, etc.).
 - Maintain social distancing (fewer than 10 persons, 6 feet apart, etc.)
 - Trace the Sign of the Cross *over* (instead of *on*) the forehead, without touching.
 - Omit the pre- and post-baptismal anointings, or else use a fresh cotton ball for each anointing (similar to Anointing of the Sick) and dispose of the cotton ball in a plastic baggie, to be burned immediately after the liturgy.
 - Use fresh water for each Baptism.
 - Instead of using your hands, pour the water using a vessel (pitcher, seashell, etc.) over another receptacle, and dispose of the water after each Baptism.
 - Do not practice Baptism by immersion.

Confirmation should also be delayed until regular public celebration of Mass resumes. In danger of death, administer Confirmation as soon as possible (canon law grants all priests the faculty to confirm in such a case).

○ When laying hands, extend hands *over* the confirmand without actually touching.

Use a fresh cotton ball for each candidate; follow similar protocol as for Anointing of the Sick: Use a sterile, unused cotton ball for each anointing; Dip it into the oil only once; Apply the oil saying the sacramental formula; Do not re-dip the cotton ball back into the oil. Discard the cotton into a sealable plastic baggie, which you should later safely dispose of by burning.

When greeting with the Sign of Peace, do not touch the confirmand.

X. Miscellaneous

- Questions or concerns not addressed in these guidelines should be directed to margeviciust@archspm.org.