

Sacramental and Pastoral Care Update Regarding the Covid-19 Crisis
Bishop John B. Brungardt, Catholic Diocese of Dodge City
May 20, 2020

INTRODUCTION

“Jesus said to them, ‘I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me will never hunger, and whoever believes in me will never thirst’” (John 6:35).

The Lord calls us to full, conscious, and active participation in the Holy Eucharist, the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. The Eucharist is the source and summit of our lives as Catholics. After much consultation and prayer, I have decided to restore the celebration of public Holy Masses in limited areas with important guidelines (see below).

In these unprecedented times, let us reflect on St. Paul’s profound teaching: **“Do nothing out of selfishness or out of vainglory; rather, humbly regard others as more important than yourselves, each looking out not for his own interests, but [also] everyone for those of others. Have among yourselves the same attitude that is also yours in Christ Jesus”** (Philippians 2:3-5).

I ask for patience, humility, shared sacrifice, cooperation, understanding and mutual charity as we continue this difficult journey as a community of Christ. With Jesus in our midst and united with our neighbor, we will continue to build up all people amid this coronavirus pandemic.

GUIDELINES

These guidelines are published May 20, 2020, and are subject to change, due to the evolving nature of the covid-19 crisis. Additional directives will be given as circumstances change.

General:

1. All the faithful continue to be dispensed from the obligation to participate in Holy Mass, until further notice.
2. Those who are symptomatic, who have been exposed to another person with the virus within 14 days, who are at risk due to age or underlying health issues, who are ill, or who care for the ill *are strongly urged to stay at home.*
3. If a priest feels at risk because of age and/or health, he is to call me. We will try to find a substitute, or his parish(es) may have Sunday Celebration in the Absence of a Priest.
4. Those who do not participate in Holy Mass are encouraged to view or listen to livestreamed, recorded, televised, or radio Masses. Parishes are encouraged to continue to livestream or record Masses for the faithful who are unable to celebrate in person. Our prayers are with you. Please pray for all.
5. *Ford, Finney, and Seward counties in the Catholic Diocese of Dodge City:* public Holy Masses *remain suspended* until further notice. The total number of cases of coronavirus disease in these three counties as of May 18, 2020 is 3464, greater than the three hard-hit

counties in northeast Kansas that have a much greater population. The faithful in our three counties are called to a *shared sacrifice* to help reduce the spread of this virus. We pray that this pandemic lessens in these three counties, and around the world, so that all may return to the regular celebration of Holy Mass.

6. *The other 25 counties in the Catholic Diocese of Dodge City: public Holy Masses may resume* Wednesday, May 27, 2020, subject to the guidelines below.
7. Seating capacity in churches will be greatly reduced due to the strict six-foot distance between worshipers (members of households may sit together). *The faithful are strongly encouraged to participate only in Holy Masses of their own parish.* Mutual charity with all, as we seek to lessen the spread of this virus. Those able are asked to consider participating in a Holy Mass on a weekday, which would allow space for others on the weekend. The availability of seating may be facilitated by online registration, phone tree, grouping by alphabet, etc. This may be like Christmas Eve when some folks go to a less crowded liturgy. The priests who are able may schedule additional Holy Masses, beginning as early as noon Saturday for the Sunday Mass (temporary permission).
8. The parish staff and council members will assist the priest to determine how to best celebrate Holy Mass within these guidelines. For example, extra cleaning supplies, bottles of hand sanitizer, and masks should be available at each church. The priest or other minister may give the faithful directions at appropriate times during the liturgy for these new procedures. All are strongly urged to humbly follow directions in this difficult time.
9. Masses in the parish hall, Knights of Columbus hall, or school are permitted at the discretion of the pastor. Outdoor Masses are not allowed at this time.
10. Let's not forget those without Internet and/or smartphone, those who remain at home, and the ill. They are each beloved members of our community. Contact them by telephone, by postal mail or in person with this information.
11. This remains an evolving situation. We cannot preclude the possibility that public Masses in the diocese may again need to be suspended.

Before Holy Mass:

1. Thorough cleaning and disinfecting of pews, door handles, restrooms, etc., must be done before each liturgy or prayer service. All hymnals, missalettes, etc., must be removed and stored. Holy water fonts are to continue to be empty. Cry rooms must be closed.
2. Each family is strongly urged to bring hand sanitizer and use it before entering the church.
3. Each person is strongly urged to bring and humbly wear a face mask (or other facial covering like a bandana or scarf) during Holy Mass, except for the moment of receiving Holy Communion. Priests are required to wear a mask during the distribution of Holy Communion, at other times at their discretion.
4. Members of a household may sit together. A six-foot distance is to be maintained in all directions between others. This may be facilitated by the labelling of pews/chairs. The six-foot distance is to be maintained by all ministers, including ministers in the sanctuary and musicians.
5. Physical touching another (handshakes, etc.) is strongly discouraged.
6. Doors are to be propped open to prevent touching the surfaces.

7. Ushers are to be instructed to charitably assist with these guidelines, including gently turning away people when the church's capacity (respecting the six-foot distance) is reached.
8. A small stand or table is to be placed at each communion station (explanation below).

During Holy Mass:

1. Collection baskets are not to be passed, but rather a basket may be provided at the entrance. The offertory procession is suspended. The Sign of Peace continues to be suspended, and other touching of others during Holy Mass is strongly discouraged (childcare excepted). Holy Communion to the faithful via the Precious Blood continues to be suspended (special arrangements may be needed for those who have celiac disease, etc.).
2. Communion processions are to maintain the six-foot distance. This may be facilitated by tape on the floor and/or by ushers. Distributing to only one side of the church at a time may be necessary.
3. Holy Communion on the tongue in a parish Holy Mass is suspended during this crisis. If you wish to receive Holy Communion on the tongue: participate in Holy Mass in your own parish, make an act of spiritual communion, after Holy Mass email Bishop John (bishop@dcdiocese.org) to schedule a time for him to distribute Holy Communion to you in the chancery chapel in Dodge City.
4. Priests, deacons, and EMCs must sanitize their hands immediately before and immediately after distributing Holy Communion to the faithful. If a minister inadvertently touches an individual communicant, the minister must stop, place the ciborium on a stand or table, sanitize his/her hands, then continue. This process takes great patience and extended time under these circumstances.

After Holy Mass:

1. Ushers may facilitate the faithful departing from church so that the six-foot distance is maintained. Possibly dismissing row-by-row from the back would work, one side at a time.
2. Ushers are not to hand-out bulletins or other materials. Physical touching another (handshakes, etc.) is strongly discouraged upon exiting the church.
3. After Mass receptions, meetings, food/drink, etc., are not allowed until further notice.
4. Thorough cleaning and disinfecting of pews, door handles, restrooms, etc., must be done after each liturgy or prayer service.

Other:

1. *The 25 counties resuming public Masses:* Baptisms, Funerals, Weddings, RCIA, quinceañeras and other liturgies and prayer services may be celebrated with these guidelines. See your pastor, parochial administrator, or parish life coordinator for details.
2. *Ford, Finney, and Seward counties:* Baptisms, Funerals, Weddings, RCIA, and quinceañeras may be celebrated *with a 10-person limit* in addition to the above guidelines. See your pastor, parochial administrator, or parish life coordinator for details.
3. The Sacrament of Confirmation is suspended at this time. Questions have arisen regarding the original suggestion of anointing with Chrism with a cotton ball or cotton swab to avoid

physical contact. This issue has been submitted to the Congregation for Divine Worship in the Vatican. This may delay some RCIA folks.

4. Confessions: The “box” confessionals or reconciliation rooms must not be used. A screen is to be used in an open space, without kneelers, keeping six feet between the priest and penitent. For face-to-face confessions, both the confessor and the penitent must wear face masks and maintain a six-foot distance. Penitents are to confess standing or using an armless chair to minimize hand contact with surfaces. “Background” music is suggested to reduce the chance of a confession being overheard.
5. Adoration chapels are to remain closed at this time.
6. Routine meetings for adults like Pastoral Council, Finance Council, Knights of Columbus, or Altar Society may resume, with participants following the six-foot distance, using masks, sanitizing, and not serving food/drink.
7. Speak with your priest if you have questions. Priests with questions may call Bishop John. Thank you for your prayers, patience, and dedication to your Catholic Faith in Jesus Christ our Risen Lord.

CONCLUSION

Let us renew our liturgical life by full, conscious, and active participation in Holy Mass and other liturgies. If we cannot participate in Holy Mass at this time, let us pray that our Lord assist us to celebrate soon the Bread of Life with our parish community.

“Love one another as I love you” (John 15:12) is a guiding teaching of Jesus and is especially needed in today’s serious health situation. Let us trust in the Risen One, our Savior Jesus Christ, who loves us more than we can ask or imagine. Bishop John

For more information:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>

Kansas Department of Health and Environment

<https://www.coronavirus.kdheks.gov/>

Thomistic Institute:

<https://thomisticinstitute.org/covid-sacraments>

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