



August 10, 2020

Updated Guidelines for Liturgies and other Ministry Activity in Parishes

Our faith informs us that attendance at Sunday Mass is *essential* for the wellbeing of the faithful whenever reasonably possible. Therefore, effective on August 17, 2020, the general dispensation to attend Sunday Mass will be lifted and the Sunday obligation restored for all the faithful *except those at increased risk of serious illness¹ and those responsible for their care*. Pastors and Catholic leaders should anticipate and plan for more faithful at Mass and other ministries and events.

To that end, the following guidance is intended to aid in discerning appropriate measures to implement. This guidance replaces what was provided on May 1, 2020. It is the fruit of clarity in prayer, broad consultation, and a comprehensive review of data.

Celebration of Mass and Other Liturgies

1. Persons with symptoms of an illness are asked to stay home.
2. Promote prudent and reasonable social (physical) distancing and good hygiene practices.
 - a. This can be done, for example, with signs at entrances stating: Please be prudent about practicing social distancing and healthy hygiene.
 - b. In those worship spaces where pews have been marked off in 6 ft. distancing, pastors may gradually remove the physical barriers (e.g. ropes, etc.) to allow for more seating.
 1. The removal of physical barriers might be done only in certain areas of the church's seating. By designating a certain portion of the worship space, we are respecting that some parishioners may prefer physical barriers to aid them in maintaining reasonable social distances.
 2. Parishes may introduce these changes incrementally, over a series of weekends so as to encourage Mass attendees to self-initiate prudent and reasonable social distancing practices.
 - c. Provide sanitizer and disposable masks at entrances allowing faithful to sanitize and wear masks if they so choose.
 - d. In some parishes, it may be appropriate to designate a particular Sunday Mass for those who are more vulnerable or who provide regular care to those at elevated risk. This might allow some to feel safer while attending.
3. All faithful are free to access the sacraments, liturgies and other ministries of our parishes. Preregistration should no longer be requested of Mass attendees so the faithful can attend when it best serves them.
4. Pastors may consider offering additional Mass times but should not exceed a reasonably healthy number of Masses for each priest (c. 905).

5. Pastors are asked to normalize the parish's use of liturgical ministers wherever reasonably possible, including the Mass procession.
6. It is prudent that the sign of peace would continue to be suspended and that the passing of collection baskets should be avoided. Similarly, at this time, gift bearers should not be used during the offertory at Masses.
7. Disposable worship aids, rather than missalettes or hymnals, should be considered.
8. Holy Water may be restored to Holy Water receptacles in church and other typical locations in Catholic facilities for those who choose to use it.

Consecration and Distribution of Holy Communion

1. Placement of ciboria for consecration of hosts for the faithful should be on a separate corporal to the side of the celebrant's paten and chalice. Deacons and concelebrants should receive from separate ciborium and only concelebrating priests intinct.
2. Priests, Deacons and any Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EMHC) are expected to use hand sanitizer prior to distribution of Holy Communion.
3. Make provisions for some EMHC's to wear masks when distributing to serve parishioners preferring to receive from someone with a mask. Priests and Deacons should not wear masks when distributing within the Mass. A purificator and sanitizer should be available at each location Holy Communion is distributed in case there is physical contact with the hand or tongue of the communicant so proper sanitation can occur before communion is distributed to others. Priests concerned about their personal health may delegate the distribution of Holy Communion to an EMHC.
4. Distribution of Holy Communion should be provided on the tongue or hand based on the desire of the faithful during mass. If some parishioners prefer to receive after Mass, reasonable accommodations should be provided on an as-needed basis. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion should use an ablution bowl for their fingers and then hand sanitizer after distribution of Holy Communion.
5. Distribution of the Precious Blood is not advised except in case of gluten intolerance, for which arrangements may be made with the priest prior to Mass.
6. Priests should purify their own paten and chalice.

Parish Ministry and Formation Considerations

1. Due to the important nature of various parish ministries for people of all ages, parishes should plan to resume offering spiritual, educational and pastoral formation. Programming and formation opportunities, including a plan for how programming delivery may be modified in the event of a positive COVID-19 test result being reported by a participant. If a positive COVID-19 is identified, seek professional and diocesan counsel on how best to respond.
2. Persons with symptoms consistent with those commonly seen among COVID-19 patients are asked to stay home from all formation and/or social activities.
3. When offering these ministries, parishes and schools should:
 - a. Promote prudent and reasonable social (physical) distancing. Mask wearing may be appropriate when persons are in close contact with others for prolonged periods of time. SD Department of Health guidance defines prolonged as “within 6’ of one another for over 15 minutes.”
 - b. Promote good hygiene, such as frequent handwashing/sanitizing, routine cleaning of spaces, and more frequent disinfection of frequently-touched objects may be encouraged.
 - c. Provide sanitizer and disposable masks at entrances, enabling people to sanitize their hands and wear masks if they so choose.
4. Small groups and family-centered catechesis and formation may prove especially fruitful and may be considered.
5. Some individuals and families may be exploring creative or alternative educational models, such as homeschooling or remote education. Creativity and flexibility in programming and timelines for completion should be adapted to serve the faithful well. Parishes and schools are encouraged to prioritize ongoing outreach by regularly providing formation resources for participants.

Use of Parish and School Facilities and Public Gatherings

1. Parish facilities may be used for gatherings either for parish ministry activities or, if a local practice, for personal use in accord with the facility’s use policy or with the consent of the pastor.
2. Persons with symptoms of an illness are asked to stay home. Promote prudent and reasonable social (physical) distancing and good hygiene practices.
3. Provide sanitizer and disposable masks at entrances enabling people to sanitize their hands and wear masks if they so choose.
4. Good hygiene, such as frequent handwashing/sanitizing, wearing a mask when in close contact with others for prolonged periods, routine cleaning of spaces, and more frequent disinfection of frequently-touched objects may be encouraged.
5. Physical layout, e.g., the arrangement of tables and chairs, may be modified to promote social distancing and hygiene or sanitation supplies should be available whenever possible.

Remaining Attentive to Public Health Information

The South Dakota Department of Health regularly updates demographic data about COVID-19 infections and hospitalizations daily. Pastors, principals and Catholic leaders should consult this data frequently to make certain local increases in the risks for severe illness are not taking place as they might merit adjustments to the measures contained in these guidelines.

The department's updated data can be accessed at:

<https://doh.sd.gov/news/coronavirus.aspx>

Those at Increased Risk for Serious Illness

There is a continuum of increasing risk, especially concerning age, and the scientific data is continually developing concerning the increased risk posed by various underlying medical conditions.

For the purposes of the dispensation from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass, those at increased risk for severe illness is exclusive to those aged 65 or older and the following medical conditions, as identified by the Center for Disease Control, may also constitute severe risk: cancer; chronic kidney disease; chronic obstructive pulmonary disease; in an immunocompromised state (e.g. from solid organ transplant); obesity (body mass index of 30 or higher); serious heart conditions, such as heart failure, coronary artery disease, or cardiomyopathies; sickle cell disease; and type 2 diabetes mellitus.

Prolonged Contact

Department of Health Guidelines define prolonged contact as having been within 6 feet of another individual for 15 minutes or longer.