



## ***Free to worship Him without fear...***

*(Canticle of Zechariah, Gospel of Luke 1:68-79)*

*protocols for resuming public worship in a time of pandemic*

*May 28, 2020*

### **Part 2: Preparing to Gather again**

#### **To resume gathering we must be prudent and prepared**

The Bishops recognize that not everyone may be ready to come back to public gatherings, and ***strongly encourage those more at-risk not to attend for the time being.*** (i.e. persons over 65 and those with underlying health conditions such as heart or lung disease or diabetes, obesity, compromised/suppressed immune systems) are at greater risk of severe illness or death from COVID-19).

In addition, anyone showing any symptoms of sickness, or anyone who has a household member who is sick or showing symptoms of sickness should not attend or anyone who has had known contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19; this includes priests or other ministers who are sick or showing signs of sickness.

Also, they have directed that proper social/physical distancing be maintained as much as possible given the layout and floor plans of Churches and the limitations of spaces.

#### **What we have done preparing for your coming to Church**

We have been working hard to prepare for your return, and are excited to be able to celebrate Mass with a congregation again. We will also continue live-streaming Masses and other events for the foreseeable future. Please know that we have set up the space in a new way, making efforts to follow public health guidance to mitigate and reduce the potential for transmission of COVID-19 or other illnesses. Please read the below and make proper preparations if you wish to attend Mass.

- It is our goal to make as sure as possible that the Church and public spaces be thoroughly sanitized before and after each service, including all entryways and doors. We have implemented cleaning practices for commonly touched areas in our building: pews, bathrooms, door handles, chairs, water fountains, light switches, and microphones.
- We have tried to make our space and interactions as “touch-free” as possible. People should do their best to avoid touching door handles, elevator buttons, and any items touched often by others.
- Due to requirements of physical/social distancing, there will be a significant reduction in the capacity of the Church, not to exceed 25% (¼) of the total capacity. This is only 55 people at St. Elizabeth, and 65 at St. Andrew. If there are more than this, people will not be able to stay for Mass. (Please arrive a bit earlier than you normally might).
- We have developed a plan for restroom use to limit the number of people who enter a restroom at the same time to 1 person (unless of the same household), there will be tape on the floor outside the restroom to indicate where people should stand in line to wait for the restroom, maintaining 6-foot distance from each other.
- People are not to greet each other by touching.
- People are not to remain in the Church or building for informal social time before or after Mass--this must happen outdoors and people ought to maintain physical/social distancing of at least 6 feet.

- Doors will be propped open and one-way traffic patterns have been introduced to facilitate social distancing, please follow the signs upon entering the Church. Ushers should assist when necessary to help maintain social distancing.
- Holy water fonts and stoops are empty, please request a bottle of Holy Water from one of the ushers or the priest or deacons should you wish to take some home.
- Alcohol based hand sanitizers will be available at all entryways and in the center aisle of Church unless it becomes impossible to source it. People are encouraged to bring their own supply, “just in case”.
- Ventilation will be increased as much as possible, (i.e .opening windows and doors) — you may wish to bring a sweater if the weather is cool outside.
- People are to do their best at all times to maintain physical/social distancing, realizing that there may be brief moments of passing close to others, please avoid contact as much as possible.
- All Song Books have been removed from the pew racks, if needed disposable song sheets will be provided at the beginning of Mass and should be discarded afterward.
  - Since the recommendation of the Ad Hoc Committee of the Catholic Medical Association: “...singing should be avoided, as...a high aerosol generating activity that could spread COVID-19 or other viruses.” <https://www.cathmed.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Road-Map-to-Opening-Our-Churches12May20V2.pdf>
  - And the recommendation of the MDH is: “Singing is a higher-risk activity as it more forcefully expels respiratory droplets than speaking. And the act of singing may contribute to transmission of COVID-19, possibly through emission of aerosols. Congregations should refrain from singing. Congregations are strongly encouraged to offer pre-recorded *music or only one cantor singing at a distance of at least 12 feet from anyone else during the service, while wearing a face mask.*” (emphasis added) *PLACES OF WORSHIP | Minnesota Employer Preparedness Plan Requirements Checklist* [https://mn.gov/deed/assets/worship-guidance-ACC\\_tcm1045-433301.pdf](https://mn.gov/deed/assets/worship-guidance-ACC_tcm1045-433301.pdf)
  - And Bishop Hoepfner’s Memo to the Priests of the Diocese directs: “At this time, singing by the congregation is prohibited at Masses in the Diocese of Crookston.”
  - ***NB: Since our physical layout prevents this 12 foot distancing, we will likely not be having ‘live’ music at our Masses for the time being.*** Also, if there is pre-recorded music utilized, the people are not to sing. (at the direction of the Bishop)
- Two out of every three pews have been marked off so people cannot sit too close. It is imperative that you (unless they are members of the same household living together) maintain physical/social distancing of at least 6 feet .
- Collection baskets will not be passed person to person, rather there will be designated places for collection envelopes and offerings near the entrances to the Church. Also, we encourage you to use the option of online giving.
  - For St. Elizabeth’s [Donate Online](#)
  - For St. Andrew’s [St. Andrews Catholic Church ~ Hawley, Minnesota](#) and go to Online Giving

## Preparing yourself and your family to come to Mass on Sundays

- Take care of your own health and that of your family, eat nutritious foods, drink plenty of water, get adequate sleep, and frequently wash your hands for more than 20 seconds with soap and warm water.

- Complete the health survey questions for all members of your family before you leave home (as below) for Church. If you have had any of these we advise you to stay home and to contact your health care provider for further information.
- Have you or anyone in your family, or anyone you are caring for at home had any of the following symptoms since the last time you were here that you cannot attribute to another health condition?
  - Cough
  - Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
  - Fever above 100.4 (or feeling feverish)
  - Chills
  - Muscle pain
  - Sore throat
  - New loss (or dullness) of taste or smell
  - This list is not all possible symptoms. Other less common symptoms have been reported, including gastrointestinal symptoms like nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea. If you have any of these symptoms, please do not attend Mass.
- If you have traveled out of the area (more than 125 miles from home), we would ***respectfully request you not come to Mass for two weeks*** from the day you return home unless you have had a medically-administered COVID-19 antibody test and have been found not to be carrying the virus within the same two-week period.
- Ensure all family members have PPE before you leave home (Masks, gloves, eye-protection, hand sanitizer, any other items you wish).
- Special attention should be given to children to make sure social distancing is practiced. Parents should speak to their children before coming to Mass to let them know things will be different.
- At a minimum, every person over age 2 ought to bring and wear a mask. If people wish to wear gloves, feel free to do so. We will make every effort to maintain a supply of hand-sanitizer in the Church, but it is recommended that you may also wish to bring your own supply “just in case”.
  - ***All persons attending Mass will be required to wear a mask which covers the mouth and nose before they enter the building. If they are not wearing a mask, they will not be allowed to stay for Mass.***
  - The CDC recommends wearing cloth face coverings in public settings where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain (e.g., grocery stores and pharmacies), especially in areas of significant community-based transmission.
  - CDC also advises the use of simple cloth face coverings to slow the spread of the virus and help people who may have the virus and do not know it from transmitting it to others. Cloth face coverings fashioned from household items or made at home from common materials at low cost can be used as an additional, voluntary public health measure.
  - ***Cloth face coverings should not be placed on young children under age 2***, anyone who has trouble breathing, or is unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance.
- Try to limit the potential need to use the restrooms at Church, go at home before leaving--little ones may need reminders.

## **What to do (or not) while at Church**

- The priest and other liturgical ministers need not wear masks or gloves during the celebration of the Mass, though this is not forbidden. They should remain more than 6 feet from the congregation during the entirety of the Mass to

reduce the risk of infection. To the extent possible, the other ministers (deacon, altar servers, lectors) should maintain a 6-foot distance from the priest and from each other.

- At this time, we will not be utilizing the ministry of cantors, accompanists, lectors/readers, commentators, acolytes/altar servers, or extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion. Thank you for your service, and we look forward to the days when we can resume your ministries.
- Priests or other ministers who are part of a vulnerable population should keep social distance very strictly by not processing in and out of the sanctuary through the center/main aisle and may choose not to distribute Holy Communion.
- The presiding priest will be the only one to prepare the bread and wine for the Mass. He shall wear gloves while doing so and will handle the hosts (bread) and little as possible and they shall be placed in a covered ciborium (communion vessel) until placed on the altar.
- Holy Communion will be distributed to the people only under the form of the Body of Christ.
  - “While an appreciation for reception of ‘the whole Christ’ through [only] one species should not diminish in any way, the fuller sign value of reception of Holy Communion under both kinds. Holy Communion has a fuller form as a sign when it takes place under both kinds. For in this form the sign of the Eucharistic banquet is more clearly evident and clearer expression is given to the divine will by which the new and eternal Covenant is ratified in the Blood of the Lord... Thus, **the Church has always taught the doctrine of concomitance, by which we know that under each species alone, the whole Christ is sacramentally present and we "receive all the fruit of Eucharistic grace"** *Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion under Both Kinds in the Dioceses of the United States of America* (15, 16, 20) CCC 1390.
- The priest/deacon/or minister should wear a mask and sanitize his/her hands before distributing Holy Communion.
- Both the communicant and minister should use hand sanitizer before touching a mask to take it down for communion, and after touching a mask to put it back on. *Note: hand sanitizer must be applied thoroughly and allowed to dry to be effective.*
- The priest/deacon/or minister takes his/her place next to the communion station.
- The faithful remove their face coverings as they approach the priest/deacon/or minister.
- The faithful receive Holy Communion in the normal way. It is not forbidden to receive Holy Communion on the tongue, **but we respectfully request that for the present time those who can receive in the hand without injury to their spirit consider doing so.** (*Yes, I know. Redemptionis Sacramentum, no. 92*)
- If the priest/minister senses his fingers have made contact with a person’s hands or mouth, he is to pause the distribution. If any physical contact occurs between the communicant and the priest/minister, the minister will immediately sanitize his hands with alcohol-based sanitizer, then let his hands dry for 1minute to avoid membrane irritation and secretions before resuming distribution of Communion.
- Communion lines should maintain physical/social distancing and marks will be placed on the floor to facilitate this.

**Thank you for reading all the way to the end and giving your attention to these new norms as we begin to gather.**

Please continue to pray for all affected by this pandemic, for a quick end to it, and pray for one another. May God bless you!

Rev. August J. Stollman