

**From:** Julie Greer  
**Sent:** Tuesday, May 12, 2020 3:16 PM  
**To:** Julie Greer  
**Cc:** Fr. Michael J. Lumpe  
**Subject:** Update Letter to Priests  
**Attachments:** Guidelines for All the Faithful for The Return to Public Worship.pdf; Return Recommendations for Parishes.pdf

*Father Lumpe is having computer issues... this is the regular daily email.*

Brother priests:

Again I want to extend my thanks and appreciation to all of the priests who were able to participate in last Friday's Zoom conference call. We covered a lot of ground and I know there is a certain level of cautious enthusiasm among the priests – and the faithful for that matter – as we begin safely to emerge from this coronavirus lockdown, and do so one step at a time taking into prime consideration the continued health and safety of all.

Attached you will find two documents providing guidelines for the return to public worship, and another document with a number of recommendations. These documents are the result of many discussions with a wide-ranging group of priests and persons in specific fields. I encourage you to call together members of your parish staff and key parishioners and volunteers to review this information and discuss their implementation in your parish. We will publish the guidelines on the diocesan website along with a letter to the faithful in next couple of days. I will send you a copy of that letter before posting it.

Please feel free to contact Fr. Adam Streitenberger for further information on these materials: [astreitenberger@columbuscatholic.org](mailto:astreitenberger@columbuscatholic.org) .

Tomorrow, May 13, we celebrate the **Memorial to Our Lady of Fatima**. Even there, in Fatima, Portugal, the Shrine to Our Lady of the Rosary is asking pilgrims not to come there because of the coronavirus. Father Carlos Cabecinhas, Rector of the Shrine, recently said “This is a most painful moment: The Shrine exists to welcome the pilgrims, and not being able do it is a cause of great sadness.” I think we can empathize with him on many levels. Given the importance of the Blessed Virgin Mary and her message to the children at Fatima, I encourage you to share the Fatima Shrine web page and information today with your parishioners via social media to encourage special intercessory prayers to Our Lady of Fatima. You can access the web page, in English and in several languages, here: <https://www.fatima.pt/en> . The message of Fatima is one of faith and trust in God during a particularly difficult moment in time, the First World

War. Our Lady speaks to us today through this vision calling us to ongoing conversion and prayer, especially of the Holy Rosary.

We would normally have a procession here in Downtown Columbus from Holy Family to St. Patrick on May 13. Given that we will not be able to do that Father Alcott, Father Dailey and I along with two Dominican Sisters, Sister Leonarda, OP and Sister Maria Fatima, OP will pray the Rosary at the Cathedral after Mass. I invite you and your parishioners to join us in the Prayer of the Holy Rosary broadcast on St. Gabriel Radio, tomorrow around 12:40 PM and rebroadcast at 5 PM. Our Lady of Fatima, pray for us!

Fraternally,  
+Bishop Brennan



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# Catholic Diocese of Columbus

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## **The Return to Public Worship and Sacramental Life in the Diocese of Columbus**

### **Introduction**

We have been through a lot together these last weeks. I appreciate all of your sacrifices and patience. On March 16, 2020, I announced what to then would have been unimaginable – the suspension of public Mass here in Ohio. At the time the known facts and the unknown questions were overwhelming. Yet our participation in the State-wide efforts seem to have made a significant difference to allow the medical professionals to meet the Covid-19 virus in an orderly way and to save lives. We grieve those who died and pray for them and their families. We continue to pray for those who are ill and in harm's way. And we thank all those who have served us in so many ways at great personal cost.

We look forward to the return of public worship in a way that honors those sacrifices by “opening” in a way that is responsible and provides for the health, safety and well-being of all. The Eucharist is the very heart of our life together. This time has been difficult for all. The resumption of public worship later this month is a sign of hope but will also mean a great deal of careful planning and hard work. Thanks you in advance for your flexibility. What follows are some General Guidelines applicable to all parishes and institutions.

### **The Return**

Churches may be opened starting next week. Safe distancing, hand hygiene, and regular cleaning of likely-touched surfaces are to be maintained. Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, without solemn exposition or benediction, is permissible.

Regular confession times and public daily Masses may begin May 25. Safe distancing, hand hygiene, and regular cleaning of likely-touched surfaces are to be maintained.

Public Sunday Masses may begin on May 30-31.

### **General Guidelines for the Faithful**

Bishop Brennan dispenses the Catholic faithful who reside in the Diocese of Columbus and all other Catholics currently in its territories from the obligation of attending Sunday Mass until September 13, 2020.

Those who are “high risk” are especially those highly susceptible to COVID or those who manifest symptoms of COVID. Those “susceptible to COVID,” include those over the age of 70 or those who have serious health conditions. Symptoms include a cough of any kind or a fever. Those who are “high risk” are especially cautioned to avoid public gatherings, including Mass until it is safe for them to attend. Though we wish that all could gather with us for the Eucharist, we cannot guarantee complete safety at this time.

We ask for your ongoing patience and flexibility. It is likely that we may not be able to accommodate safely everyone desiring to come to Mass. We ask for you to consider other options for attending Mass, such as by livestream, in overflow chapels, at other Mass times, or at a public daily Mass.

Those attending Mass are asked to maintain hand hygiene. Hand hygiene includes washing their hands prior to coming to Mass, bringing their own hand sanitizer, sanitizing their hands before and after touching any surface, and avoiding needless touching any surfaces.

Those attending Mass are asked to maintain physical distancing before, during, and after Mass. Physical (safe or social) distancing is defined as maintaining six feet separation between others. Members of the same family are not bound by safe distancing.

Those attending Mass are asked to wear a cloth face covering, unless they are under the age of two. Parishes are encouraged, if possible, to offer masks for those who do not have their own.

Parishes will be developing specific procedures for a safe environment for the return. Such planning includes making hand sanitizers available at the entrances of the church, disinfecting commonly touched areas, limiting seating to ensure safe distancing. Mass schedules may need to be altered to ensure sufficient time for disinfecting. Overflow locations or advance ticketing may be necessary for safe distancing. Those “high risk” persons are not to serve in a liturgical ministry or as a volunteer for Masses. Ushers and greeters will be required to wear masks and gloves.

Our celebration of the Mass will seem a little different. Holy water will not be available. Masks will be worn by priests, deacons, and eucharistic ministers at the distribution of Communion. Music will be limited. No offertory procession (bringing up the gifts) will occur. The distribution from the chalice is omitted. The instruction “Let us offer the sign of peace” and subsequent sign of peace is also omitted. The distribution of Communion will follow safe distancing practices. The reception of Holy Communion in the hand is strongly encouraged.

These instructions remain in place until further notice from the bishop’s office.



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# Catholic Diocese of Columbus

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## **Guidance for Pastors on Developing Procedures for the Return to Sacramental Life**

### **Preliminary Steps**

**Forming a Return Committee:** Pastors might consider the formation of a Return committee (including someone from the medical field) to help develop parish procedures.

**Determine whether the Mass schedule should be altered:** The faithful are dispensed from their obligation. Based on our experience before the “stay at home” order on the weekend when all of the faithful were last dispensed, we can expect Mass attendance to be 33% of what we would likely have at a normal Sunday Mass [October count estimate]. A conservative estimate, based on the potential of an increase due to piqued interest because of the hiatus in public Masses, suggests that Masses will only be 50% of what their normal attendance is [50% of the October count]. Factoring in that on a normal Sunday most Masses are under 50% of their seating capacity [actual capacity not October count], we can estimate that most Masses will be around 25% to 33% of their actual seating capacity in the first few weekends. Generally, proper social distancing will reduce seating capacity to 33% of the normal seating capacity. Therefore, with our conservative estimates, we can predict that most Masses will be able to accommodate the estimated crowds with safe distancing practices.

- Pastors, especially with regular Masses above 50% seating capacity, are encouraged to prepare a space (a hall, gathering space, or gymnasium) for potential overflow crowds and provide livestreaming of the Mass. If an overflow space is needed or available, it will also require sanitizing.
- Determine with your committee whether to use ticketing in advance ([Eventbrite](#)) to ensure that safe distancing is maintained.

**Determine needed sanitization.** In consultation with the maintenance staff and committee members, develop a list of all surfaces that will need disinfecting after Masses. Develop a plan to ensure the cleaning of vessels, liturgical items, liturgical vestments, server albs and cassock and surplices. High use areas within the sanctuary should also be wiped down with disinfectant after each Mass, including pews, chairs, and ambos. Light switches, door handles, push plates, and knobs should be sanitized after each Mass. Find volunteers and staff to coordinate the sanitizing. They will need to be instructed in proper procedures and not be “high risk.”

**Publish the Guidelines:** Explanation of the General Guidelines and parish procedures will need to be communicated to all parishioners using the parish website, social media, livestreaming events, mailings, signage throughout the physical plants, and announcements at Masses.

### **Determine Parish Protocols for the Celebration of the Mass to Consider**

- Consider recruiting teams of “Ushers” to assist in safe distancing at Masses. These ushers are to wear gloves and masks. These “ushers” might direct people to their seats. In the case that pastors decide to have parishioners dismissed by rows for communion and/or to exit, these ushers could also guide the parishioners. Those in “high risk” are strongly advised not to serve in a liturgical ministry or as a volunteer for Masses.
- Provide instruction to all liturgical ministers on the parish’s procedure for safe distancing. The Office of Divine Worship has specific instructions drawn up for liturgical ministers.

- Priests, deacons, and liturgical ministers are not to wear masks or gloves during the Mass. However, masks may be worn at the distribution of communion; gloves are not to be worn. (GSPC, 9)
- Hand sanitizer should be available for ordinary and extraordinary ministers of communion before and after they handle the Eucharist and distribute communion.
- Consider minimizing the number of liturgical ministers to only those absolutely necessary so as to avoid potential contamination, including limiting the role of the deacon or limiting him to the proclamation of the Gospel rather than assisting at the Liturgy of the Eucharist.
- Priests, deacons, and liturgical ministers are encouraged to maintain safe distancing and refrain from face touching.
- Consideration should be given to how to preserve social distancing while vesting before and after Masses.
- The processional and recessional may be shortened or modified. No offertory procession (bringing up the gifts) should occur.
- Pastors may consider avoiding the offertory collection or having those collecting donations use long handled baskets. Special boxes or baskets might be left at the exits for people to deposit their offertory.
- It is advisable that the Roman Missal be on a stand at the chair and/or at the altar rather than having a server hold it.
- Consideration should be made regarding the setting of the altar and avoiding contact with the chalices, paten, ciborium, and other items. The priest may dip his fingers in a bowl filled with water for the hand washing.
- Pastors might consider placing the paten or ciborium containing hosts for the faithful on a corporal to the side of the altar rather than in front of the priest.
- The distribution from the chalice is omitted. The instruction “Let us offer the sign of peace” and subsequent sign of peace is omitted.
- Choirs and congregational singing are discouraged. Music may be led by a cantor.
- Remove hymnals and other printed material from the church during this time to prevent the spread of the contagion. The use of worship aides may be considered. They should be used only once and disposed of properly after Mass. Consider copyright guidelines.
- Following Mass, it is suggested that socialization after Mass is to be avoided. Pastors may choose to include an instruction on this at the end of Mass.
- Social hours should be canceled.
- Regarding the distribution of communion: Pastors may decide between distributing communion within the Mass or immediately following the Mass. These two options are described in Guidelines for Sacraments and Pastoral Care by the Thomistic Institute. Suitable explanation should be provided prior to Mass on the new routine for communion. The faithful should be reminded to remove their face masks immediately before receiving communion so as not to fumble with the mask and communion.
- Regarding Distribution to the homebound: Great caution must be ensured that those ordinary and extraordinary ministers of communion visiting the homebound will not endanger those susceptible to COVID. Visits must be brief and ministers are to wear masks, practice hand hygiene with hand sanitizer, and maintain social distancing.
- The reception of Holy Communion in the hand is strongly encouraged. It is suggested that hand sanitizer be available next to those distributing communion in case they make contact on the hands with droplets from those receiving communion.

- Rescheduling sacraments: It is recommended that the Mass of Initiation of the Elect is to occur either at a regularly scheduled or special Mass during the weekends of May 30-31, June 6-7, or June 13-14. The delegation to confirm un-catechized adult Catholics desiring to complete their initiation is granted to all priests for the time period until September 13. It had previously been granted for only the weekend of Pentecost.
- It is left to the discretion of the pastor to schedule first communion, which could be scheduled on a weekday evening or Saturday morning to preserve safe distancing. If pastors judge that it is necessary to reschedule confirmation, contact the bishop's office. Infant baptisms, funerals, weddings, and processions of the Blessed Sacrament for Corpus Christi will need to follow proper hygiene and safe distancing procedures according to the pastor's implementation of these guidelines.

### **Prepare the Space for Public Worship**

- Hand sanitizers are to be made available, especially at entrances and in the sanctuary.
- The church will need to be cleaned and disinfected prior to the first Mass. After each subsequent Mass, disinfecting of likely touched surfaces will need to be repeated.
- The Center for Disease Control provides [directions](#) on how to disinfect surfaces.
- Regarding cleaning agents, please consult with Central Purchasing.
  - Some recommendations: Avistat disinfectant spray. Oxivir has also been recommended. For wood surfaces, consider using Avistat or P&G Proline Spic and Span. There is no product on the market specifically for disinfecting wood surfaces. The products recommended will work but without a guarantee. If one is concerned, test the product first on an inconspicuous area and do not leave the wood wet with the product for extended periods of time.
- Every third pew should be designated for seating. Tape may be used to block off the other pews.
- Taped X's six feet apart along the main aisle (for communion) and where the confession line begins are suggested to ensure safe distancing in lines. Painter's tape is suggested.
- Regarding restrooms, consider initially closing access to restrooms. Because some parishioners may require access to restrooms, announcements about the restrooms might be included in the publication of safety standards leading up to the first weekend of public Masses. If restrooms will be made available, cleaning after each Mass and placing X's six feet apart to indicate the safe distancing line will be necessary. Signage may be posted encouraging only two or three people in a restroom at a time.
- Determine whether to block access to cry rooms, small gathering spaces, and the sacristy.
- Consider having the doors propped open for those entering the church.
- Ensure that all holy water fonts are to remain empty except for when needed for the Mass of Initiation or infant baptisms.

### **Important Resources:**

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/reopen-guidance.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html>