

**Healthy at Worship – Archdiocese of Louisville**  
**Public Masses and other Liturgical Celebrations During the COVID-19 Pandemic – May 11, 2020**

**I. Plan to Re-open Parish Churches for Public Masses and other Liturgical Celebrations**

1. Archbishop Kurtz is issuing a dispensation from the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation for the Archdiocese of Louisville, until further notice. Anyone who is sick or living with someone who is sick should stay home, as should anyone who feels vulnerable for other reasons. Parishes offering livestreamed and recorded Masses should continue to do so and should communicate those options for those who cannot be physically present. For parishes unable to offer access to Mass online, please direct parishioners to the listing of these Masses at [www.archlou.org/COVID-19](http://www.archlou.org/COVID-19)
2. Beginning on Wednesday, May 20, parishes that are ready to open safely may once again have public gatherings for weekday Mass – so long as social distancing guidelines below and related restrictions on the number of people that can be present – are in place.
3. Beginning on Saturday/Sunday, May 23-24, parishes that are ready to open safely may once again have public gatherings for weekend Mass – so long as the social distancing guidelines below and related restrictions on the number of people that can be present – are in place.
4. Funerals and Weddings: Beginning on Wednesday, May 20, parishes that are ready to open safely may once again have public gatherings for funerals and weddings – so long as the social distancing guidelines below and related restrictions on the number of people that can be present – are in place.
5. Permission is granted for parishes to hold outdoor or parking lot Masses on their property. Parishes able to do so should consider this option, weather permitting. Social distancing also applies to these events. There needs to be space so that chairs or cars of participants from different households are six feet apart. For outdoor Masses, participants should be instructed to bring their own chairs. For drive-in services, attendees should be instructed not to leave their cars.
6. Further guidance will be provided about the process for infant baptisms, bringing the Elect and candidates for full communion into the Church, and the resumption of First Communions and Confirmations, if applicable.

**II. Social Distancing and Other Requirements for Liturgical Events in the Time of COVID 19: Communicate often through all available means to all parishioners about the plan to open (above) and directives (below) as well as your specific site plan. Have written versions available for parishioners as they come to Church. Signage also will be helpful to remind everyone about good practices such as hand washing, the availability of hand-sanitizer, etc.**

## DIRECTIVES

7. Mark or arrange seating to allow at least six feet between parishioners, with an exception made for members of the same household:
  - a. Limit the available seating in your church to allow for social distancing. You may consider using every other pew or row of seats, determining seating by the square footage of the seating area, or removing seating when possible. Once you determine the seating capacity, efforts should be made to limit the number of parishioners attending a given Mass. You should inform parishioners of these limitations and indicate that seating will be first come, first served. Consider using ribbons or signs to restrict seating in pews.
  - b. One family unit may gather in each pew.
  - c. Where large pews or long rows of seats exist, allow a minimum of six feet between families or individuals.
8. Provide hand sanitizer at all church entrances. Have hand sanitizer available in or near the sanctuary and require Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion to use it prior to distributing Communion.
9. During this initial period of re-opening, all parishioners should wear face coverings or masks when attending Mass. Require any liturgical minister to wear a mask or face covering with the exception of cantors or lectors while they are singing/reading. Priests and deacons should wear masks or face coverings when distributing Communion. Please consider having masks available for parishioners and offer to those who do not have one. However, an individual not wearing a mask should not be denied admittance.
10. In order to limit physical contact, only the priest and deacon may distribute Communion during weekday Masses.
11. Continue to suspend distribution of the chalice other than to the deacon. If possible, the use of a second chalice for the deacon is a preferred option.
12. Church choirs should not gather and sing together. Choir members should sit among the assembly. It might be helpful to reduce the amount of congregational singing in the initial stages of reopening and use instrumental music and/or music for the cantor only.
13. The exchange of peace among the assembly may be omitted or expressed through gestures that do not involve physical touching.

14. Suspend ancillary gatherings connected to Mass, such as Children's Liturgy of the Word or coffee and donuts following Mass until further notice. Church nurseries should not reopen at this time.
15. Clean frequently touched surfaces and objects daily (e.g., tables, pews, countertops, light switches, doorknobs, and cabinet handles) with a recommended disinfectant. Try to wipe down pews and all hard surfaces, including bathrooms, after every Mass. See the CDC guidance on cleaning and disinfecting at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/reopen-guidance.html>. Parishes may consider recruiting committees of hospitality ministers, art and environment ministers, and/or regular church cleaners to assist with this process. Try to have disinfectant cleaning supplies available in other areas where parishioners may enter during Mass, especially bathrooms.
16. When cleaning, avoid the use of products that could re-aerosolize infectious particles. This includes, but is not limited to, avoiding practices such as dry sweeping or the use of high-pressure streams of air, water, or cleaning chemicals.
17. Continue to observe the current guidelines for the Sacrament of Penance: priest and penitent must remain six feet apart and be in a safe, soundproof space.

**ADDITIONAL GUIDELINES: These suggestions are from various sources and may not apply in all circumstances. Please adapt to your needs.**

18. Communicate often with parishioners about recommended hygiene and the need to stay home if they have symptoms. All parishioners should wash their hands thoroughly before attending Mass and after using the restroom at Church, and they should be encouraged to take their own temperature at home before attending Mass. If possible, limit bathroom use to one person at a time during Masses.
19. It will be important to consider alternatives for the distribution of Holy Communion in order to mitigate transmission of the virus. How will your parish maintain social distancing? How will you communicate to parishioners about receiving Holy Communion? You may wish to reassure parishioners who do not feel comfortable receiving and have an in-pew Spiritual Communion resource available. Other options include distributing Holy Communion after Mass or the priest and Extraordinary Ministers moving through the pews to distribute Communion as opposed to having people form lines.
20. Consider acceptable alternatives to regular practices during the liturgy in order to mitigate transmission. This includes options such as having only one lector as opposed to two; not having altar servers hold books for the priest or having the server put the book on a stand rather than holding it.

21. Utilize other methods for the collection if you pass a basket from one person to the other. You may wish to have parishioners place their offerings in baskets at entrances to the Church. You also can consider baskets on handles passed by hospitality ministers in churches with short enough pews. It would be helpful to have gloves available for collection counters when they are counting money.
22. Consider having hospitality ministers open doors for parishioners as they arrive and depart from Mass or prop open doors if possible to decrease the number of people touching the doors.
23. Consider taking the temperatures of all ministers participating in the Mass before Mass begins and make sure the assembly knows that this practice is being followed. A non-contact thermometer or thermal imager is recommended for public use.
24. Enhance your normal practices for cleaning and refreshing holy water stoups and baptismal fonts. Please clean at least weekly. You may wish to remove water from the stoups by entrances and keep water only in the main font.
25. Use discretion in resuming visits to the sick and homebound and the distribution of Holy Communion to these individuals. Policies in place at hospitals and other facilities are to be followed at all times.
26. Postpone other non-liturgical gatherings on church property, such as meetings, and/or utilize virtual meeting technology. If they are deemed essential to occur in-person, meetings should follow these same social distancing guidelines, and participants should wear masks.
27. Observe these directives and guidelines for any other liturgical celebrations held in the church as well, such as prayer services, other sacramental celebrations, and Eucharistic adoration.