

Diocese of Winona-Rochester (*Revised March 23, 2021**)

Guidelines for the Public Celebration of Masses
and Other Liturgical Celebrations

**Protocols 5, 6, 15, 21, 24, and 39 were amended May 14, 2021, following the end of the state-wide mask mandate.*

I. DIRECTIVES that should be followed for the safe celebration of Mass:

Preparations before Mass:

1. The faithful should be aware that the obligation to attend Sunday Mass remains dispensed until further notice.
2. Priests and deacons over age 70 or those with pre-existing health conditions, who have not been vaccinated, should not feel obligated to publicly celebrate or participate in public Mass. If they do, it should be done with extra care, decreasing interactions when possible.
3. Priests should not celebrate more than three Masses on Sunday (Can. 905 §2). Permission to celebrate more than three Masses must be requested.
4. Mass may be celebrated outdoors on church property, so long as these guidelines are followed.
5. Those attending Mass are encouraged to wear masks. However, pastors or local municipalities may choose to require masks indoors.
6. Signage must be placed on entrance doors reminding anyone with fever or flu-like symptoms not to enter the church, and that there still will be a risk for anyone who attends a public Mass to contract the coronavirus. Parishes should post signs at the entrances advising people as they enter that masks are encouraged.
7. Limit the number of entrances being used and designate an entrance door and an exit door, where possible.
8. Social distancing of a minimum of 6 feet between people not living in the same household or arriving in the same group must be followed.
9. A minimum of using every other pew should be followed; every third pew is preferred.
10. Parishes may have missals, hymnals, prayer cards or other paper resources in the pews. Parishes may also provide missals or missalettes for parishioners to take home and bring to church. If paper worship aids are used, they cannot be reused for the next Mass.
11. Hand sanitizer should be available at all church entrances and exits.
12. Holy Water fonts and baptismal fonts must remain empty. Bottled Holy Water may be made available for parishioners to take home.

13. If possible, limit the number of ushers, greeters, altar servers and/or volunteers needed for each Mass.
14. A cantor and accompanist are allowed, but choirs should not be used (unless expressed permission is granted for special circumstances). Congregational singing may take place. Woodwind and brass instruments may be used sparingly. Further guidance on music in the Liturgy may be found in the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) [Music Activities and Performances During COVID-19](#).
15. Hospitality ministers and ushers must not make physical contact when greeting parishioners.
16. Sacristans, servers, and those who prepare Communion elements must carefully wash their hands prior to touching the bread and pouring the wine; a facemask and gloves are recommended.
17. All vessels containing the bread and wine are to remain covered until placed on the altar, and may remain covered during the Eucharistic Prayer.
18. Separate chalices should be used for the celebrant, each concelebrant, and deacon. Each cleric should purify his own chalice.
19. All patens, ciboria, chalices, cruets, bread and wine should remain on the credence table in the sanctuary and handled only by the sacristan or those whom the pastor delegates.
20. All liturgical ministers must wash/sanitize their hands before and after Mass.
21. Photos may be taken before, during, and after Liturgies, at the pastor's discretion. Any posed photography should be planned so as to limit the time when people are standing at a close distance. Social distancing guidelines may be suspended for a brief time in these circumstances.
22. Parishes must develop and implement a COVID-19 preparedness plan that addresses the MDH guidance for safely reopening our churches.
23. Receptions or social gatherings may take place, according to the [guidelines for entertainment venues](#). Capacity is limited to 50%, up to a maximum of 250 people. Effective April 1, venues with over 500 occupant capacity may accommodate more than 250 people, according to the guidelines above or the [MDH capacity calculator](#).

During Mass:

24. For a monetary collection, baskets or other appropriate containers could be placed at church exits or elsewhere in the building for people to drop envelopes or donations. As an alternative, baskets with long handles are allowed; collection baskets are not to be passed person-to-person. Ushers taking the collection are encouraged to wear masks and gloves. Ushers must immediately wash or sanitize their hands after the collection.

25. There is to be no presentation of gifts.
26. The Sign of Peace is omitted entirely. Consequently, during Mass, when the celebrant says, "The peace of the Lord be with you always," and the people respond, "And with your spirit," the celebrant forgoes the usual invitation to offer a Sign of Peace and moves immediately to the "Lamb of God."
27. The faithful should be reminded that at this time no one is obliged to receive Communion, and that Christ is encountered in those gathered in his name, in the proclamation of the Word, and especially by joining themselves to the offering of Christ to God the Father during the Eucharistic Prayer. The benefits of Spiritual Communion should continue to be promoted.
28. Communion is to be distributed by the priest(s), deacon, and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EMHC) as needed.
29. All Communion ministers must sanitize their hands before and after the distribution of Holy Communion.
30. Communicants should be reminded to observe the 6-foot distance between themselves while in line to receive Holy Communion. Only one, single-file line is permitted to approach the minister, rather than two parallel lines.
31. If inadvertent contact is made between minister and communicant, the minister is to purify his hands before continuing to distribute Communion. It may be prudent to have a small table with the proper items for sanitizing nearby.
32. Encourage Communion to be received only in the hand for the health and safety of both the minister and faithful. Any communicant wearing gloves must remove them prior to receiving. Those who receive in the hand should consume their consecrated host in the presence of the minister. If someone insists on receiving Communion on the tongue, an EMHC should be designated for this purpose. If no EMHC is available or willing, communicants should receive on the hand, or make a Spiritual Communion.
33. It is preferred that Communion be distributed at its normal time.
34. Communion will not be distributed to the faithful from the chalice; pastors may make exceptions on an individual basis according to their prudential judgement, for example, for those with celiac disease who cannot partake of the host, preparing a chalice beforehand as needed.

After Mass:

35. Based on the parish's COVID-19 preparedness plan, use the plan's log to document adherence to the protocols within the preparedness plan.
36. Parish bulletins may be passed out by ushers after Mass, or be available for people to pick up themselves by the door. As an alternative to handing out bulletins, parish bulletins should be posted to the parish website or emailed to parishioners.

37. After being purified according to the rubrics, all Communion vessels are to be thoroughly and properly cleaned after Mass with hot, soapy water.

38. Offertory money should be placed in a tamper-evident bag, logged, and kept in the safe. It may be beneficial to wait at least three days before counting the collection.

39. Offertory counters should wear gloves, and practice social distancing.

II. RECOMMENDATIONS for the priest's discretion:

40. Frequently touched surfaces in the church (door handles, microphones, etc.) should be regularly cleaned and sanitized per the [MDH](#) and [Center for Disease Control](#) (CDC) recommendations, according to a set schedule in the parish's preparedness plan.

41. Mass attendance may be organized as needed, for example, by providing a sign-up system either on the parish website or by calling the parish office.

42. Ushers should direct the Communion line and markings should be placed on the floor to preserve social distancing.

43. If possible, hand sanitizer should be available in the aisle(s) for use by people prior to receiving Communion.

44. Entrance doors should be propped open to limit contact with door handles, or else ushers should hold open doors.