

Response to Coronavirus Public Celebrations of Mass

DIOCESE of ARLINGTON

GUIDE for the LAY FAITHFUL

November 13, 2020

Changes based upon amendments made November 13, 2020
to Executive Orders 63 & 67 and Sector Guidelines.

What To Know

All the faithful of the Diocese of Arlington are **dispensed from the obligation to attend Mass** on Sundays and holydays of obligation until further notice.

Those Who Are Vulnerable • If you or those for whom you care are “vulnerable” to infection or the serious effects of coronavirus, please avoid gatherings of the general public.

Those who are “vulnerable”

- are over the age of 65,
- have existing heart or lung conditions,
- have diabetes, &/or
- are otherwise immuno-compromised.

Those Who Feel Sick • If you feel sick in any way, are coughing, or are sneezing frequently, please avoid public gatherings, including liturgical celebrations.

Livestreamed Masses • Parishes will continue to livestream Masses as they are able. If you are vulnerable, sick, or concerned with your safety or the safety of those whom you regularly encounter, please continue to unite prayerfully to the Mass via livestream.

In-Person Participation • Your parish will coordinate in-person participation for the Mass & other liturgies. Each parish has different capabilities. Please be charitable & understanding with your pastor & parish staff. Contact your parish for details.

What To Expect

Person-Per-Gathering Limits • The Diocese requires every parish to follow person-per-gathering limits set by public health authorities, which may vary by locality. Contact your parish for details on in-person participation.

(Revised) Individuals attending “religious services” must be seated at least six feet apart at all times and must practice physical distancing at all times. Family members may be seated together.

If the number of participants exceeds the limit, the priest or a minister will have to ask individuals to leave. Please avoid putting our beloved priests & ministers in this unfortunate position. Above all, exercise charity!

Social Distancing • The Diocese requires every parish to ensure social distancing with due respect for the reverent enactment of the sacred rites. Kindly follow the directions of ministers, as well as posted signs & markings.

Disinfection & Ventilation • The Diocese requires every parish to ensure disinfection & ventilation before & after each liturgy. The church may be closed briefly, if necessary. Please follow the directions of your parish.

Holy Water & Hymnals • The Diocese requires every parish to remove holy water from all fonts & hymnals/missalettes from pews.

Porters • For each liturgy, parishes are encouraged to assign at least one “porter” — a minister who keeps watch at the doors. Porters ensure that capacity limitations & related safety practices are observed. This ministry is especially challenging at this time. Please be patient, understanding, & kind in following the directions of all ministers.

Preparing

Making Plans • During this time and due to capacity limits, please do not plan to attend liturgies at any parish at which you are not registered.

Face Coverings • **(Revision) All persons aged 5 and older are expected to wear a face covering in accordance with the revised Executive Orders 63 & 67.**

Hand Hygiene • You are expected to disinfect your hands when entering the church & encouraged to do so again immediately before receiving Communion. Please bring your own hand sanitizer, which should contain at least 60% alcohol.

Celebrating

Processions • Ministers will maintain social distancing during processions. Please also remain six feet from ministers in procession.

Presentation of the Gifts • The Diocese requires that the presentation of gifts by members of the assembly be omitted.

Collection • A collection may take place. Please be attentive to the directions of your parish. If available, please consider supporting your parish through online giving.

Lord's Prayer • The Diocese prohibits holding hands during the Lord's Prayer.

Sign of Peace • The Diocese requires that the invitation "Let us offer each other the sign of peace" & the exchange of peace that follows be omitted.

Communion

- The Diocese suppresses the distribution of the Precious Blood until further notice.
- At this time, priests, deacons, & instituted acolytes shall distribute Communion. The use of EMHCs is left to the discretion of the Pastor. EMHCs cannot be in a vulnerable category, and they must be properly trained for ministry during the pandemic.
- All present who are in a state of grace may receive Communion. Those who have health concerns are not obliged.
- Please follow the procedures of your parish for the distribution of Communion.
- Please maintain social distancing in the Communion Procession.
- You are encouraged to disinfect your hands immediately before receiving Communion.
- You retain the right to decide how to receive, whether on the tongue or in the hand. Please prayerfully consider temporarily receiving reverently in the hand.*
- It is not permitted to receive Communion in the hand while wearing gloves. If you are wearing gloves and will receive Communion in the hand, please remove your gloves for the reception of Communion.
- Ministers are encouraged to disinfect their hands immediately after each & every communicant who receives on the tongue, even if no physical contact has occurred.
- Ministers are also encouraged to disinfect their hands immediately if accidental contact is made with a communicant's hand.

* Information available in U.S. Center for Disease Control, *Interim Guidance for Leaders of Faith Communities* (23 May 2020) <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/guidance-community-faith-organizations.html>; & World Health Organization, *Guidance for Faith Communities* (7 Apr 2020) <https://www.who.int/publications-detail/practical-considerations-and-recommendations-for-religious-leaders-and-faith-based-communities-in-the-context-of-covid-19>.



This revision dated November 13, 2020, supersedes the previous Mass Guide for the Lay Faithful dated June 30, 2020.