



Clarifications About COVID-19 Prevention Measures

March 21, 2022

1) Our guiding principle:

All COVID-19 Public Health Orders were lifted on Tuesday, March 15, 2022. As such, our archdiocese is entering a new phase with regards to COVID-19. Although parishes are no longer legally bound to follow COVID prevention measures, they must carefully consider their own road map on how to ease their way out of the pandemic, such as when to phase out social distancing, hand washing and sanitizing, the wearing of masks, whether those persons wishing to receive communion on the tongue continue to wait that all other members of the congregation have received Communion in the hand before coming up to receive the Host, etc.

After two years of pandemic, we are all quite familiar with the fundamentals of COVID prevention – masks, social distancing, hand washing, disinfection of hands, staying home when sick, etc. (See Appendix at the end of this document).

Our guiding principle is that it is up to pastors, parish pastoral councils and/or parish COVID teams to discuss which measures should be maintained or lifted, at which time this ought to occur, and how to best communicate these changes, according to the parish's needs. These considerations should be made in all charity, with the good of all in mind. Some will wish to continue wearing a mask. Others won't. Some will choose to maintain social distancing. Others won't.

2) Measures

The Distribution of Communion returns to pre-pandemic practice, with the exception that the communion cup is not yet to be offered.

Holy Water fonts may be used once again. A good time to begin doing so might be on Easter, filling them with baptismal water or blessed Easter water.

Collection procedures may resume to pre-pandemic practice.

Offertory Processions can be reinstated to pre-pandemic practice.

The Sign of Peace can be done with the shaking of hands or continue to be expressed with a head bow or a friendly, respectful wave toward others in the assembly.

Communion Processions no longer require physical distancing.

3) Some points to consider in the discussion and discernment of your parish road map to emerge from the pandemic

Masks – The wearing of masks is one of the most effective prevention tools in fighting COVID, flu, and other respiratory viruses including the common cold. It is no wonder that the last Public Health Order to remain in place was mandatory mask wearing. Our diocese continues to recommend mask wearing by parishioners, when it is necessary for the well-being of all and vulnerable persons, while respecting the choice of each parishioner to discern whether or not they choose to do so.

Our diocese also continues to recommend that lectors, cantors, presiders, deacons and extraordinary ministers of Communion wear masks while approaching the lectern, or when distributing Communion.

Clergy should also wear a mask when visiting the sick and when administering Sacraments that require a close face-to-face proximity.

Sanitization – Hand sanitizing stations should still be made available at the entrances. We continue to recommend their use.

Social distancing – Though no longer required, parishes may choose to maintain social distancing for a certain time.

Choirs – Based upon the last two years' experience, parishes may consider keeping choirs a good twenty feet from the congregation as well as the wearing of masks by all choir members.

Ventilation – Since proper ventilation is key in the prevention of COVID, and other respiratory illnesses, parishes should study the need of improving their ventilation system.

Livestreaming – The livestreaming of Masses should continue in order to benefit members of the community who cannot attend Mass, such as the ill, the shut-ins or those in personal care homes, etc.

APPENDIX - “A New COVID Normal?” – Doctors Manitoba Web Page

Doctors Manitoba have created a new page on their website, which we invite parishes to share in their electronic bulletins, websites and social media: [Doctors Manitoba | A New COVID Normal?](#)

The page contains information and science-based advice for individuals wishing to ease into a post-COVID world, such as: masks, vaccination, reconnecting with others gradually, and persons at increased risk.

God bless, and thank you,

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