



*Ven, Holy Spirit, Ven!*

## Guidelines for Reopening Mass to the Public

Sunday Mass will reopen to the public beginning the weekend of May 23-24, 2020.

**Archbishop Gustavo's dispensation** of all Catholics from the obligation to participate in the Mass on Sundays and other holy days of obligation within the territory of the Archdiocese of San Antonio granted on March 13, 2020 remains in effect until repealed. *In the event of another health emergency public Mass may be suspended again.*

Archbishop Gustavo strongly encourages the **elderly and at-risk populations** to stay home and participate in Mass by means of Catholic Television or parish live streaming.

### General Norms

Regarding the number of attendees allowed at Mass, all Masses held in the Archdiocese of San Antonio will comply with the directives of state and local authorities in effect at the time of the Mass.

1. Follow the executive orders of civic authorities and the directives of the Archdiocese of San Antonio.
2. Throughout the Archdiocese the number of persons allowed to enter the church for Mass is limited to that number which can maintain appropriate social distancing.
3. If a parish or chapel cannot maintain required social distancing and sanitizing, it should remain closed for public Masses.
4. Anyone feeling sick, or exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19, should stay home.
5. Parishes must have trained teams prepared to sanitize the church and to support social distancing before opening.

### Sanitizing the Church (See Appendix I)

1. Before and after each Mass, and other times the church is used, clean and disinfect all surfaces that parishioners are likely to touch. Include sanitizing the restrooms.
2. Recognizing that each parish has many types of surfaces to disinfect, alcohol based disinfectants are recommended for wood surfaces. Bleach-based cleansers may damage wood surfaces.
3. Parish cleaning teams must wear face masks and gloves while sanitizing. All employees and volunteers must wash or sanitize their hands upon entering the church.

## **Church Environment**

1. Mass attendees will maintain a six-foot distance from others as they enter the church. Masks will be required for all persons except those too young to wear a mask throughout the Mass and anyone unable to remove a mask without assistance.
2. The number of persons allowed to enter the church will be limited to that number which can maintain the social distancing guidelines of a minimum of six feet between persons. When capacity is reached, parishioners may be directed to an overflow space if one is available.
3. Each parish should design a seating pattern to maintain proper social distancing. All Mass attendees will be seated according to the parish seating plan. Separate sections may be designated to respond to people's particular needs.
4. All loose printed materials should be removed from the church. Bulletins and notices should be kept at exit areas. All songbooks, missals, normally available paper materials, etc. are to be removed until further notice.
5. Holy water fonts are to remain empty at this time.
6. Hand sanitizer must be available at the entrance of the church, in the sacristy, and near the altar area.
7. Entrance and exit doors must be adequately designated with signs, and monitored. Those entering must be counted for compliance with capacity limits.

## **During the Mass**

1. The presiding priest need not wear a mask, except during distribution of Holy Communion. Only the presiding priest should venerate the altar with a kiss at the beginning and the end of the Mass. Concelebrants should be separated by the required six-foot distance.
2. If a deacon serves at the Mass, he must maintain a six-foot radial distance from the presider and other ministers.
3. If an altar server is necessary, choose mature altar servers who can maintain social distance requirements.
4. Singing, especially near others, may increase the risk of viral spread. Music alone is the safest choice at this time. If there is a choir, each member should wear a mask and maintain six-foot intervals from one another.
5. At the Sign of Peace, the faithful are encouraged to greet each other with a simple head bow, or some other gesture of greeting while maintaining the required six-foot radial distance.
6. Collection basket(s) should not be passed among parishioners. (Long handled collection baskets may be used if the usher can maintain required social distance.) Collection baskets placed near the church exit will allow people to make contributions when exiting. Ushers should monitor the collection baskets.
7. Offertory processions of bread and wine will be omitted for this time. Altar breads that have been presorted into the ciboria (use the lid) will be placed on the credence table

prior to the beginning of Mass. During the preparation of the gifts, covered ciboria will be placed on a separate corporal at the end of the altar until the time for distribution.

8. Communion by the chalice is reserved to the presiding priest until further notice. Intinction is not permitted
9. The Priests, Deacons, and Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist should wear a mask and sanitize their hands immediately prior to administering Holy Communion and again after distribution to all.
10. Multiple communion stations may be used as long as one-way traffic patterns are observed.
11. Ushers will guide the faithful to receive Communion. (Each parish will establish procedures for distribution of the Eucharist respecting these guidelines)
12. The use of personal hand sanitizer by parishioners before leaving the pew is encouraged. Persons should come forward in a single communion line in the aisle designated at six-foot intervals. All aisles should be one-way traffic only. Masks should be worn in the communion line and then lowered while in line before approaching the Communion Minister. After communion the mask should be raised immediately. Communion will be received in the hand only.
13. After the final blessing ushers assist in the dismissal of parishioners according to the parish plan for and in a manner that allows for social distancing.
14. Bulletins and other material for distribution should be placed at the exits for all to receive as they leave.
15. Priests and deacons should not make physical contact with parishioners as they exit.

### **Guidelines for Clergy**

1. Priests and Deacons must maintain a six-foot distance from each other and from parishioners. Priests and deacons are not to stand at the entry area before or after Mass.
2. Priests and deacons are responsible for monitoring social distancing in the sacristy.
3. The ciboria should be pre-filled in the sacristy and placed on the credence table, ready to be brought to the altar at the preparation of the gifts. The number of ciboria should match the number of ordinary and extraordinary ministers. The altar remains clear until the time of the preparation of the gifts. The lid of the ciboria should remain on until the time for distribution.
4. For the sign of peace, a simple head bow, or some other gesture of greeting while maintaining the required six-foot radial distance.
5. When the Mass is concelebrated, each priest should use and purify his own chalice.
6. At the preparation of the gifts, the ciboria should be placed on a separate corporal at the end of the altar and will remain there until the time for distribution.
7. The priest alone will elevate both the chalice and paten (ciborium) during the doxology within the Eucharistic Prayer.

8. When a priest or deacon plans to distribute Communion, he is to sanitize his hands immediately prior to the distribution and again after distribution to all. Priests and deacons will wear a mask during the distribution of the Eucharist.

### **Guidelines for the Assembly**

- For those attending Mass, please see the information sheet at the end of this document, *Guidelines for Mass Attendees*.

### **Guidelines for Specific Roles**

#### ***Altar Servers***

- If altar servers are necessary at your parish, mature altar servers who can maintain social distancing should be chosen.

#### ***Choir***

- The choir should be limited. Choir members are to maintain the required six-foot radial social distancing in the choir area. The choir must wear face coverings when singing. Wind instruments should not be used at this time.

#### ***Extraordinary Ministers***

- Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist (EM) must wear masks during the distribution of Communion. They must sanitize their hands immediately prior to and after administering Holy Communion.

#### ***Lectors***

- Lectors should wear a mask and try not to touch the ambo or microphone, if possible.

#### ***Sacristans***

- One Sacristan at a time is allowed in the sacristy unless space permits a six-foot distance between two sacristans. Ideally the sacristan will arrive before the priest and deacon enter the sacristy to prepare the vessels for the Mass.
- The ciboria should be pre-filled and with the lid on, placed on the credence table to be brought to the altar at the time of the preparation of the gifts. The filled and covered ciboria will be placed on a separate corporal at the end of the altar until time for distribution. The number of ciboria should match the number of ordinary and extraordinary ministers.
- At the conclusion of Mass, sacristans should wash the sacred vessels with water and soap and dry them before the next Mass begins.

#### ***Ushers***

1. Some ushers, because of age or high risk, should reconsider serving at this time.
2. Ushers will be trained in the proper application of these guidelines, the seating plan for the church, and the plan for parishioners entering and leaving the church.
3. Ushers must wear masks and disposable gloves throughout the celebration of the Mass.

4. Ushers should count those entering the church; once the seating capacity has been reached, ushers will direct people to an overflow area, if available.
5. Ushers are to ensure that individuals are seated six feet apart from each other, unless they belong to a family unit, or are part of the same household. Individuals must maintain the six-foot distance from others not part of their family unit/household.
6. Ushers will guide the faithful to receive Communion.
7. Ushers assist in controlling the dismissal of parishioners in a manner that allows for social distancing.
8. Ushers will monitor collection baskets as people exit and deposit their donation.

### **Celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation and Other Liturgical Services**

1. Churches, chapels, shrines, and places of devotion are to remain open to the extent possible for personal veneration by the faithful, especially where Christ is adored in the Blessed Sacrament. Each pastor or administrator should determine the hours during which the location may be kept open, ensuring security and sanitation.
2. Parishes are to continue to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation, following social distancing requirements and sanitation guidelines. Priest and penitent should wear a mask.

## APPENDIX I



**TEXAS**  
Health and Human  
Services

**Texas Department of State Health Services**

**John Hellerstedt, M.D.**  
Commissioner

### **CHECKLIST FOR CHURCHES/PLACES OF WORSHIP**

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*The Office of the Attorney General and the Office of the Governor have been providing joint guidance regarding the effect of executive orders on religious services conducted in churches, congregations, and places of worship. Below is an excerpt from the joint guidance for executive order GA-18, issued on April 27, 2020. The same minimum standard health protocols would apply to funeral services, burials, and memorials.*

*In accordance with Governor Abbott's executive order GA-18, the following are the minimum recommended health protocols for all churches, congregations, and places of worship in Texas. Churches, congregations, and places of worship may adopt additional protocols consistent with their specific needs and circumstances to help protect the health and safety of all Texans. The same minimum standard health protocols would apply to funeral services, burials, and memorials.*

*We know now that the virus that causes COVID-19 can be spread to others by infected persons who have few or no symptoms. Even if an infected person is only mildly ill, the people they spread it to may become seriously ill or even die, especially if that person is 65 or older with pre-existing health conditions that place them at higher risk. Because of the hidden nature of this threat, everyone should rigorously follow the practices specified in these protocols, all of which facilitate a safe and measured reopening of Texas. The virus that causes COVID-19 is still circulating in our communities. We should continue to observe practices that protect everyone, including those who are most vulnerable.*

*Please note, public health guidance cannot anticipate every unique situation. Churches, congregations, and places of worship should stay informed and take actions based on common sense and wise judgment that will protect health and support economic revitalization. Churches, congregations, and places of worship should also be mindful of federal and state employment laws and workplace safety standards.*

#### **Health protocols for serving your attendees:**

- ☐ Strongly encourage the at-risk population<sup>2</sup> to watch or participate in the service remotely.
- ☐ Designate an area inside the facility reserved for the at-risk population, or offer a service for at-risk population attendees only.
- ☐ Ensure proper spacing between attendees:
  - ☐ Keep at least two empty seats (or six feet separation) between parties in any row, except as follows:
    - Two or more members of the same household can sit adjacent to one another, with two seats (or six feet separation) empty on either side.

<sup>2</sup> At-risk population are those who are 65 or older, especially those with chronic lung disease; moderate to severe asthma; chronic heart disease; severe obesity; diabetes; chronic kidney disease undergoing dialysis; liver disease; or weakened immune system



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- Two individuals who are not members of the same household but who are attending together can sit adjacent to one another, with two seats (or six feet separation) empty on either side.

☐ Alternate rows between attendees (every other row left empty).

### Health protocols for your employees and volunteers:

- ☐ Train all employees and volunteers on appropriate cleaning and disinfection, hand hygiene, and respiratory etiquette.
- ☐ Screen employees and volunteers before coming into the church, congregation, or place of worship:
  - ☐ Send home any employee or volunteer who has any of the following new or worsening signs or symptoms of possible COVID-19:

- Cough	- Sore throat
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing	- Loss of taste or smell
- Chills	- Diarrhea
- Repeated shaking with chills	- Feeling feverish or a measured temperature greater than or equal to 100.0 degrees Fahrenheit
- Muscle pain	- Known close contact with a person who is lab confirmed to have COVID-19
- Headache	
- ☐ Do not allow employees or volunteers with the new or worsening signs or symptoms listed above to return to work until:
  - In the case of an employee or volunteer who was diagnosed with COVID-19, the individual may return to work when all three of the following criteria are met: at least 3 days (72 hours) have passed *since recovery* (resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications); and the individual has improvement in respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath); and at least 7 days have passed *since symptoms first appeared*; or
  - In the case of an employee or volunteer who has symptoms that could be COVID-19 and does not get evaluated by a medical professional or tested for COVID-19, the individual is assumed to have COVID-19, and the individual may not return to work until the individual has completed the same three-step criteria listed above; or
  - If the employee or volunteer has symptoms that could be COVID-19 and wants to return to work before completing the above self-isolation period, the individual must obtain a medical professional's note clearing the individual for return based on an alternative diagnosis.



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- ☐ Do not allow an employee or volunteer with known close contact to a person who is lab-confirmed to have COVID-19 to return to work until the end of the 14 day self-quarantine period from the last date of exposure (with an exception granted for healthcare workers and critical infrastructure workers).
- ☐ Have employees or volunteers wash or sanitize their hands upon entering.
- ☐ Have employees or volunteers maintain at least 6 feet separation from other individuals. If such distancing is not feasible, then other measures including face covering, hand hygiene, cough etiquette, cleanliness, and sanitation should be rigorously practiced.
- ☐ Consistent with the actions taken by many churches, congregations, and places of worship across the state, consider having employees, volunteers, and attendees wear cloth face coverings (over the nose and mouth). If available, they should consider wearing non-medical grade face masks.

#### **Health protocols for your facilities:**

- ☐ Regularly and frequently clean and disinfect any regularly touched surfaces, such as doorknobs, tables, chairs, and restrooms.
- ☐ Disinfect seats between services.
- ☐ Disinfect any items that come into contact with attendees.
- ☐ Make hand sanitizer, disinfecting wipes, soap and water, or similar disinfectant readily available.
- ☐ Place readily visible signage to remind everyone of best hygiene practices.
- ☐ If a church or place of worship provides meals for employees, volunteers, or attendees, they are recommended to have the meals individually packed for each employee, volunteer, or attendee.
- ☐ Maintain rigorous sanitation practices like disinfection, handwashing, and cleanliness when preparing or serving anything edible.





ARCHDIOCESE OF SAN ANTONIO



## Precautions for Returning to Mass

As we prepare to return to public celebration of Mass, here are some guidelines to ensure the safety and well-being of our local Church.

**If you are feeling ill, stay safe at home.** We highly encourage those who are vulnerable (such as the elderly and people with underlying medical conditions) continue to participate in Mass via Parish live stream:  
[www.ArchSA.org/covid-19#livestreams](http://www.ArchSA.org/covid-19#livestreams)

Mass from San Fernando Cathedral will continue to be broadcast on CTSA on Spectrum Channel 15, Roku, Amazon Fire, Facebook, YouTube, and Vimeo.  
Find details here: [www.ArchSA.org/pastoral-ministries](http://www.ArchSA.org/pastoral-ministries)

[www.ArchSA.org/covid-19](http://www.ArchSA.org/covid-19)

## Guidelines for Mass Attendees

**Wash hands thoroughly before coming to the Church.**

**Wear a face mask before entering the Church and throughout the Mass.**

**Bring hand sanitizer, your own missal or other Mass aids.**

**Always maintain 6 feet between you and others.**

**Follow the instructions of the ushers as you enter and leave the Church.**

**Communion.** Persons should come forward in a single communion line in the aisle designated at six-foot intervals. Masks should be worn in the communion line and then lowered while in line before approaching the Communion Minister. After communion the mask should be raised immediately. Communion will be received in the hand only.

**Sanitation.** All parishes will be sanitizing pews, entrances, restrooms, and all other facilities used regularly.

**Attendance Capacity.** Because seating is limited due to social distancing, you may be asked to attend at another time or view Mass by live streaming.

More details can be found on our website: [www.ArchSA.org/mass-guidelines](http://www.ArchSA.org/mass-guidelines)