



# Memo

**Date:** May 22, 2020

**To:** Pastors, parish communicators, men and women religious, chancery staff, school presidents and principals

**From:** Archbishop Gregory J. Hartmayer, OFM Conv., Archbishop of Atlanta

**Re:** FAQ and update on instructions on resumption of in-parish worship and access to parish facilities

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We have updated the memo released this Monday, May 18, and added a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document thanks to input from our pastors, catechists and parish staff. We will continue to update the FAQ document as needed. We thank you for your patience and input as we navigate this situation.

Following consultation with the Archdiocese of Atlanta's College of Consultors, Deans of the 10 Deaneries, and lay professionals, Archbishop Gregory J. Hartmayer, OFM Conv., announces the following schedule and conditions regarding the resumption of in-parish worship and access to parish facilities. What follows is a combination of requirements, suggestions, and best practices. These procedures will be evaluated and amended, from time to time.

## General Notices

Out of concern for the well-being of all in our communities, everyone is urged to monitor carefully and abide by the directives of federal, state and local authorities, as well as guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control.

The dispensation from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass remains in effect for all in the archdiocese through Sunday, June 28. Because of this, those wishing to participate in Mass and receive Holy Communion can do so by attending any Mass any day of the week. Some parishes may wish to consider encouraging people to come on weekdays to help manage the number of attendees.

Persons are encouraged to take their temperature before leaving home and to avoid coming to church if the temperature is 99.6 or greater. Taking of temperature at church entrances is allowed, according to the parish's published or announced procedure. Anyone who is not feeling well should remain at home, out of concern for others. Those who are at risk or concerned that they or their family might become sick should stay at home and view live-streamed or online Masses.

As it is possible, parishes should continue to offer online Masses even as attendance at some Masses becomes available.

Preparation of ushers or similar monitors will be necessary in order to assist the faithful as they come to Masses.

### **Preparing Churches and Other Buildings**

Before returning to regular Masses and visitation, churches are to be deep-cleaned, including carpets, pews, restrooms, water fountains, doorknobs, light switches, microphones, music stands, chairs and other furniture. Use chemicals and disinfectants as directed, and allow for proper drying times. Thoroughly clean surfaces between church uses. More time may be required between Masses in order to permit necessary cleaning. Because of distancing requirements, Masses will likely need to be celebrated in the larger church rather than in a chapel.

Temporarily remove materials from pews and chairs—hymnals, missalettes, bibles, pens, information. Post signs requiring non-contact greetings. Cry rooms and nurseries are to be closed. Holy Water fonts should remain empty, but parishes should allow for Holy Water to be taken to homes. Sanitizer is to be available at church entrances, and, if possible, entrance doors should be propped open.

Minimize entry points into a church for usher placement, one-way direction, and sanitizing. Pews should be taped off and marked to ensure six feet of distance in all directions between household groups or individuals. Seating should take place filling in from the front to the back until the maximum available space has been reached and the usher is able to determine that no more may be seated in church. The use of overflow spaces is encouraged, where the same distancing requirements are in effect as in church.

### **Masses and Church Gatherings**

Where a priest's health is not impeded, attendance at daily Mass may begin Monday, May 25, on an announced schedule. Churches may also be open for prayer and adoration on an announced schedule. Weekend Masses may begin on Saturday, May 30, and Sunday, May 31. Parishes may use a reservation system or first-come, first-admitted procedure. Outdoor Masses allowing for greater attendance are permitted, and social distancing measures are to be observed outdoors. If people attend outdoor Masses in their cars, they are to get out and stand to receive Holy Communion.

The faithful are required to use face masks, as are ministers of Holy Communion. Priest celebrants are to refrain from using a face mask. Hand sanitizer is to be used by ushers, ministers of Holy Communion, servers, lectors, volunteers and those who clean the church.

The gifts of bread and wine are to be brought directly from the credence table or placed on the altar without a procession. Unconsecrated hosts should be placed on a corporal away from the center of the altar. There should be no physical contact at the Our Father or the Sign of Peace. One-way aisles for Holy Communion are recommended. For the time being, the Precious Blood will not be offered at Holy Communion and communicants are strongly urged to receive in the hand. Concelebrating priests should receive by intinction if there is a single chalice.

Rules of social distancing will mean that choirs and musicians will likely be used in smaller numbers. Choir practices are to be avoided because of the risk of transmission and the numbers involved. A cantor and small number of musicians is preferred. Worship aids are not to be used unless they are single-use, for that Mass only. Use of well-known music and electronic visuals are encouraged. Congregational singing is discouraged.

Collections should be taken by use of an usher-held basket or placement of monitored receptacles where congregants may safely place an offering.

Non-liturgical gatherings of more than 10 people on church property are not allowed at present. Faith Formation and Parish Schools of Religion (PSR) will follow the schedule for school re-opening and so should not have in-parish meetings at this time.

Church offices should be sanitized, and staff should work remotely as much as possible. Face masks are recommended. Maintaining electronic communication and telephone contact with parishioners is recommended.

### **Other Sacraments**

Funerals, weddings and baptisms may be celebrated, observing the same physical and hygiene requirements as for Holy Mass.

Drive-through confessions may take place without the use of face masks, allowing for six-foot distancing. Indoor confessions may take place, with the use of face masks. Use of a screen and a larger setting can be beneficial, always assuring the confidentiality of the penitent. As with Masses, those who are not well or have contact with someone who has COVID-19 should not present themselves for confession. At-home confession for a healthy penitent, if necessary, ideally takes place outdoors, with priest wearing a stole and, if indoors, a mask. At-home confession for a sick penitent ideally takes place outdoors, with priest wearing gloves and a stole, sanitizing hands and stole before and afterward.

Anointing of the Sick should be provided as requested, allowing for proper safety procedures to be in place. Some hospitals are allowing even COVID-19-infected patients to be visited. Deans of Deaneries should make provision for the sacrament to be administered if a priest is impeded by reason of his own at-risk health condition. See detailed provisions below for the Anointing of the Sick.

Priests can offer Eucharist to the homebound if they use the same procedure as below for Anointing of the Sick.

### **RCIA and Initiation Liturgies**

The Elect may be baptized at any Mass, preferably on Sunday. The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults in Exceptional Circumstances, in the expanded form, may be used at the discretion of the pastor. Non-Catholic Christians and baptized adults seeking to complete their Christian initiation (candidates) may be received into full communion at any Mass, or outside of Mass following the approved rites. Parishes wishing to receive the Elect on a common date are advised to wait until August 15, the vigil of the 20th Sunday in Ordinary Time. The Ritual Mass for the Conferral of Baptism can be used. Priests do not need permission to confirm those entering the Church through the RCIA protocols.

Plans for the resumption of parish Confirmations will be announced when it is deemed acceptable to offer those sacramental gatherings.

First Communion may take place if it can be done employing current distancing requirements. Otherwise, parishes should wait until larger Masses are permitted.

### **Ushers**

It is vitally important that ushers or other trained volunteers be prepared to assist those attending Masses. The following guidelines are partly derived from the Diocese of Lafayette, Louisiana.

Ushers/greeters should be trained prior to utilizing them for assistance at Masses and should not serve at Mass if they have fever (above 99.6), cough, shortness of breath, chills, loss of taste/smell or pre-existing health conditions putting them at risk.

These volunteers are required to wear masks at all times and gloves if they are distributing papers or collecting offerings; are required to maintain social distancing of six feet, to assist parishioners in the use of sanitizer and masks before entering church, and to ensure that the maximum occupancy (given social distancing) is not exceeded.

At Holy Communion, ushers preserve distance of six feet between communicants; allow one person or family out of the pew at a time.

When reaching capacity attendance:

- If parish does have additional seating capacity in other buildings for live streaming:
  - Have ushers direct overflow to additional space,
  - Assist with maintaining social distancing
  - Utilize same instruction as above in additional location.
- If parish does not have additional space:
  - Pastorally advise those needing to be turned away:
    - Speak kindly but firmly
    - Apologize for the inconvenience
    - Give them the times and/or locations of other Masses
    - Remind them that they are still dispensed from the Sunday obligation if they cannot physically attend another Mass
    - Advise them that there are still Masses on social media
    - If using a reservation system, ushers might take the names of those turned away and guarantee them entrance at the next available Mass
- Greeters should acknowledge parishioners by using non-contact greetings and maintaining social distancing.

### **Anointing of the Sick**

(from the Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions and the Thomistic Institute)

Follow local guidelines on the number of people permitted to gather in a space. Remain six feet away except for the act of anointing.

### ***Patient with no COVID-19 symptoms or contact*** **General**

- Wear face mask, as recommended by public health officials
- Avoid contact with surfaces
- Set anointing items at least six feet away from patient on a disinfected surface, including oil stock, cotton swab, a paper bag open and standing up and hand sanitizer
- Sanitize hands before and after

### ***Anointing Process***

- Omit the laying on of hands
- Use cotton swab to anoint. Dip and close the swab in oil, then approach
- Drop swab in paper sack.
- Sanitize hands
- Fold bag closed several times, later burn the bag
- Sanitize hands again after leaving

### ***Conscious patient with COVID-19***

**Do not bring a patient to church. Hear their confession if possible, and postpone anointing.**

***Unconscious patient with COVID-19 in residence in imminent danger of death.***

- Prepare a kit with oil stock, stole, printout of the Rite of Anointing in a Hospital or Institution, hand sanitizer, gloves, surgical mask, cotton swab and paper bag.
- Don face mask and stole before entering residence.
- Do not bring anything into home except kit – no phones, prayer cards, books.
- Avoid touching surfaces, face.
- Set up kit outside of patient room.
- Conduct anointing as described above for patient with no symptoms.
- Re-enter room after discarding cotton swab, recite Lord's prayer, concluding prayer and blessing.
- Leave printed copy of Rite in patient's room.
- Exit room, remove gloves and sanitize hands.
- Wash oil stock with soap and water, discard oil remaining in stock, wash interior, replenish.
- If the facility can equip the priest with Personal Protective Equipment, he may be permitted to conduct the whole rite next to the patient, provided his kit is placed outside the room.

[Frequently Asked Questions – English](#)

[Frequently Asked Questions – Spanish](#)

[Memo from Friday, May 22 – Spanish](#)