

COVID Safe Liturgical Directions as at 9 December 2020

The easing of restrictions on numbers at Mass from now under further notice mean that:

- Parishes are to register as COVID-safe and maintain an up-to-date COVID-safe plan.
- Parishes should observe a 2m² rule with respect to the numbers allowed to attend Mass and other indoor events: take the area of the church (or other building) in square meters and divide by two to get the upper limit of attendees.
- Outdoor Masses, funerals and weddings are now also governed by the 2m² rule.
- Where a parish has more than one building where Masses are being celebrated, each building can have the equivalent of 1 person per 2m² rule. There must be a COVID Safe plan for the Church and a separate plan for any other building where Masses take place.
- Priests and their collaborators should consider ways of encouraging people back to Mass. Even with these enlarged limits, parishes should consider holding more Masses than usual, and a mix of in-church, in-bigger-hall and outdoor Masses, especially to accommodate Christmas crowds.
- It is desirable that churches be open for private prayer where practicable. However, when your church building is open for private prayer, ensure there is sanitizer at the entrance and put in place a QR code or sign-in sheet for self-check-in to assist with contract tracing.
- For scheduled Masses pre-registration or registering on site is still required to comply with government contract tracing regulations.
- Singing by congregations and choirs is now permitted. Up to 50 members of a choir can sing indoors with no cap on choristers outside. Choristers should face forward and have physical distancing of 1.5 metres between each other and be 5 metres from other people. It is timely to remind people that: *Great importance should be attached to the use of singing in the celebration of the Mass, with due consideration for the culture of peoples and abilities of each liturgical assembly. Although it is not always necessary (e.g. in weekday Masses) to sing all the texts that are in principle meant to be sung, every care should be taken that singing by the ministers and the people not be absent in celebrations that occur on Sundays and on Holydays of Obligation. However, in the choosing of the parts actually to be sung, preference is to be given to those that are of greater importance and especially to those which are to be sung by the Priest or the Deacon or a reader, with the people replying, or by the Priest and people together.* (General Instruction of the Roman Missal, no. 40)

Certain measures aimed at reducing the risk of spreading of COVID-19 by contact with objects and surfaces, and by aerosol transmission, will remain in force for the present time, with some slight adjustments:

- A degree of physical distancing between persons not from the same household should still be encouraged.
- NSW Health continues to encourage the wearing of masks in places where people do not feel they can appropriately distance.

- Holy Water is still removed from the stoups near the church doors, but should be made available in small containers for those who request it. The rite of blessing and sprinkling of holy water at Sunday Mass is encouraged at least periodically.
- Practices such as passing of hymn books, bulletins and collection plates from person to person should **not** yet be restarted. Alternative measures that parishes have put in place should be continued for now (e.g. persons taking up the collection might move through the congregation holding the plate themselves; collection boxes might be put at strategic locations; tap and go, electronic banking and internet donation should be enabled and encouraged etc.).
- The procession with the gifts ('Offertory Procession') at Mass should **not** yet be restarted. When particular circumstances suggest this is desirable, the following procedures should be followed.
 - The vessels with bread and wine should be prepared before Mass by a person with sanitized hands.
 - The vessels should be covered, not open.
 - The persons bringing forward the vessels should sanitize their hands immediately before bringing forward the gifts and presenting them to the priest.
- Priests and deacons may continue not to offer the Sign of Peace; where it is offered, it should for the time being remain a gesture which does not involve physical contact, except between persons in the same household.
- Priests, deacons, acolytes and other extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion may wear a mask. They should sanitize their hands immediately before distributing Holy Communion.
- Holy Communion from the chalice for the faithful remains suspended; concelebrating priests and deacons should receive by intinction from a separate chalice from the one from which the principal celebrant receives.
- Holy Communion on the hand continues to be encouraged at this time for the ordinary form of the Latin Rite. Care should be taken if distributing on the tongue and those seeking this might be asked to come last to Holy Communion.

Other sacraments

- A cotton wool swab may be used for sacramental anointings at baptism, confirmation and anointing of the sick.

If the rate of community transmission of COVID-19 remains very low, it will be possible to further relax of these liturgical restrictions.