

Mission Leadership – Divine Worship



The Catholic
Archdiocese
of Edmonton

November 13, 2020

Dear Father,

With this memorandum, we are updating our guidelines pertaining to liturgical celebrations and the use of parish space in light of yesterday's announcement by the Government of Alberta regarding [new measures to curb the rapid growth of Covid-19](#). We have also included the answers given by the Archbishop during the Mid-Term Assembly to frequently asked questions. But first, we extend a heartfelt thanks to the Pastors, Associate Pastors, Parish Staff and the many volunteers who continue to be involved in ensuring access to the liturgy where the Word of God is proclaimed and the Eucharist received, and for safeguarding the health and safety of everyone.

We ask that:

1. All Alberta Health and government regulations continue to be observed.
2. Previous Covid-19 Archdiocesan guidelines continue to be in effect unless otherwise indicated by this document.
3. If a parish cannot implement provincial and liturgical guidelines, the parish should not be offering mass to the public.
4. Parishioners are reminded that the dispensation of the faithful from the obligation to attend Sunday mass remains in place until decreed otherwise by the Archbishop.

Celebration of liturgies in the Church

At this time, weekday and Sunday liturgies celebrated in the church cannot exceed one-third church capacity per service or less if required for safe social distancing. The limit for weddings and funerals liturgies is now 50 or less if required for safe social distancing. The Chief Medical Office (CMO) has explained to us that the distinction they make between weekday and Sunday masses on the one hand and wedding and funeral liturgies on the other is based on their assessment that that the latter pose a higher risk than other liturgies due to the nature of these events. Safe social distancing among parishioners must continue to be observed.

Wedding and funeral receptions, and social gatherings in parish space

Receptions and social gatherings of any type are not allowed under any circumstance at this time in parish space. These measures will be in place until further notice.

Liturgy of Baptism Outside of Mass

The maximum allowable attendance at liturgies of baptism outside of mass is 15, or less if required for safe social distancing. Each baptismal celebration should be limited to the one child (or children) of the family/household. If godparents do not belong to the family's cohort, we strongly recommend proper physical distancing be observed at all times.

Communion on the tongue

Given that the CMO gives a "strong recommendation" that food not be placed directly in the mouth of a recipient in the [provincial guidelines update of 29 October 2020](#), and given that it is not strictly necessary that

the Communion minister do so (since there is the lawful option of reception on the hand and our long tradition of making a spiritual communion), the Alberta Bishops have decided not to alter our liturgical restrictions for the time being, and continue to direct that Holy Communion be received only on the hand. The suggestion of the CMO that tongs be used is not obligatory.

Use of a mask

The use of masks is required throughout the entire liturgy by the faithful. Please ensure that volunteers are not policing people. If there is an instance when a parishioner is not wearing a mask or refuses to wear one, we ask that volunteers refer the matter to the Pastor and that the Pastor address the issue with delicacy, discretion and gentleness.

Distribution of bulletins, collection envelopes and missals

The distribution of weekly bulletins and collection envelopes and missals for the coming year is possible as long as proper precautions are taken. Please ensure that:

1. A volunteer supervises the station to ensure that parishioners are not riffling through bulletins, collection envelopes or missals. The volunteer should hand out these items without making physical contact with the parishioner receiving them.
2. Hand sanitizer is available at the station where these items are being distributed.
3. Parishioners do not line up or group together when picking up these items.

May Permanent Deacons assist in the liturgy?

In our initial communications, our response was negative. Following upon the inquiries of some pastors, we are now revising our initial response. The general principle to follow is to have only the priest present in the sanctuary throughout the liturgy. For this reason, permanent deacons may not assist at the altar at this time. This does not prevent permanent deacons from:

1. Proclaiming the Gospel, preaching and reading the prayers of the faithful (please ensure that the permanent deacon is wearing liturgical vestments when serving in this way).
2. Assisting the celebrating priest in giving Holy Communion when the priest is prevented from doing so due to his age and the restrictions placed on him because of Covid-19 (please note that since the capacity of our churches is limited during this time, only one line for Holy Communion might be required in most churches).
3. Celebrate sacraments such as baptism and weddings, as long as all provincial and liturgical Covid-19 protocols are followed.
4. Assist in parish outreach initiatives.

Preparing for Advent, Christmas and Lent

We realize that some Pastors are planning liturgical celebrations for Advent, Christmas and Lent, including penitential celebrations. As a general rule, these celebrations should be planned on the assumption that Covid-19 will be with us for the coming year and, therefore, that current liturgical restrictions will be in place during these liturgical seasons. While we commend the generosity of Pastors who are willing to offer more liturgies

than usual to accommodate more people during the upcoming Liturgical Seasons, we want to emphasize that your health is also a priority. Please consider:

1. Making the best use of live-streamed options.
2. Providing instructions and resources to parishioners on ways they can actively participate in the liturgies from home.

How early can Christmas Eve masses be celebrated?

The general principle is for anticipatory masses not to be celebrated before 4:00 p.m. We encourage Pastors to promote Christmas Day masses instead of multiplying Christmas Eve masses. During the Mid-Term Assembly, the Archbishop asked that Pastors who might need to celebrate Christmas Eve masses before 4:00 p.m. reach out to him. The Archbishop will reach out individually to those Pastors who have made their needs known to him.

Can the parish hall or town hall be used during the Christmas Season?

The answer given during the Mid-Term Assembly was affirmative. After yesterday's provincial announcement, we ask that the guideline of one-third capacity for our churches be applied also to the use of the parish hall or town hall.

Liturgical music

Our last liturgical music guidelines, issued on September 17, apply to all liturgies including weddings, funerals and Christmas Season. Only one cantor is allowed (choirs made of family members are not allowed), congregational singing is not allowed, and music is only permissible for the following parts of the mass including for Christmas Eve and Christmas Day masses:

1. Entrance.
2. Preparation of the Altar/Gifts.
3. Communion.

Please review these guidelines as you prepare music for the Christmas Season.

Sacramental Preparation

We want to continue encouraging Pastors to discern ways to offer sacramental preparation this upcoming year. The Archdiocese encourages parishes to run sacrament preparation programs remotely through the direct involvement of parents using our programs in their homes. In-person meetings that are deemed essential by the Pastor, such as sacramental preparation classes, are allowed as long as all Covid-19 guidelines are followed. For options on resources available, please contact [Fr. Kris Schmidt](#), Mission Leadership – Parish Formation.

Spray guns to sanitize pews

It is important to clarify what is meant by “spray gun.” If by “spray gun” is meant electrostatic disinfection spray application, there are some considerations to take into account prior to purchasing and using the equipment. Following manufacturer's instructions is important, especially with regard to use of personal protective equipment by the user, using a [Health Canada approved disinfectant](#) compatible with the sprayer,



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using a disinfectant compatible with surfaces to be disinfected, potential for spark generation, etc. Electrostatic sprayers can be an effective means to sanitize surfaces in large spaces, but proper research should be done prior to their use.

If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact me. I can be reached at divineworship@caedm.ca.

With assurance of my prayers,

Fr. Miguel Irizar

Fr. Miguel Irizar
Lead