



DIOCESE OF RAPID CITY

Memorandum

TO: Diocese of Rapid City
FROM: Very Rev. Michel Mulloy, Diocesan Administrator
DATE: May 1, 2020
SUBJECT: Celebrating limited public Masses in the Diocese of Rapid City

General comments

1. The following guidelines are offered in response to the desire expressed by many to allow parishioners to celebrate limited public Masses and to receive Communion. It is important to understand that parishes in certain locations within the diocese, because of the increased threat of COVID-19 and/or ordinances placed on communities or reservations by local government, might not be able to offer these limited public Masses as soon as other parishes. Likewise, if the threat from this virus should escalate in any area or throughout the diocese, limited public Masses may again be suspended. The earliest date that a pastor may celebrate a limited public Mass in the Diocese of Rapid City is May 15, 2020, in order to allow time for pastors to prepare.
2. These guidelines are being offered within the CDC guidelines under which we have been operating and with the awareness of State civil authorities.
3. These guidelines are for limited public Masses celebrated in parishes. Pastors may determine the most suitable place to celebrate these Masses.
4. Once these guidelines are in place, practical application of these efforts to the celebration of other sacraments will be considered.
5. Pastors are asked to follow these guidelines until there are further changes to the current state of emergency. At that time, new directives will be issued.

Guidelines

1. The obligation to celebrate Mass remains suspended for all persons. No one is obligated to attend Mass. Persons who are concerned about the present situation, especially those who are at high risk for contracting COVID-19 and those who are at greater risk of exposure to the disease because of their employment, are encouraged to remain sheltered and safe.
2. Pastors will have the right to determine whether or not they will allow limited public Masses. Each pastor will base this decision on what he determines is best for his people, how active the virus is in his area, and concerns he might have about his own health. Any public Masses celebrated from May 15th until further notice will follow these guidelines for safe social distancing. Pastors are also encouraged to follow the guidelines and ordinances of their own community or area.
3. Limited public Masses will be offered throughout the week. This is not a dismissal of the importance of Sunday or our tradition but rather an accommodation to allow parishioners to celebrate limited public Masses as often as is possible within these guidelines. Priests

and parishioners are asked to sacrifice for the common good and cooperate with civil authorities.

4. Livestreamed and taped Masses will continue for the benefit of those who are not able to come or choose not to come.
5. Each pastor will determine how to reach out to their parishioners and invite them to sign up to attend a limited public Mass. Pastors will develop an equitable and just way to rotate through the list of parishioners who would like to attend a limited public Mass.
6. Pastors will determine their own Mass schedule, but each priest may offer no more than two Masses per day from Monday through Saturday and no more than three Masses on Sunday.
7. Pastors with multiple parishes will determine how to apportion Masses for each of the parish communities they serve.
8. These are the guidelines for celebrating a limited public Mass:
 - a. The square footage of the space where Mass is celebrated will determine the limitation on the number of persons allowed to be present at a limited public Mass. This includes both the nave and sanctuary area. The total number of individuals, regardless of household size, will not exceed one person for each 125 square feet of space. The priests and liturgical ministers are included in this number. Each participant must be seated as individuals or households at least six feet apart from other participants or households in all directions. Pastors will need to consider both guides in determining how many parishioners will participate in any given limited public Mass. Everyone who wants to participate should have an equal opportunity to attend.
 - b. Pastors will determine how best to invite parishioners to attend a specific limited public Mass.
 - c. Pastors will inform parishioners that if they are sick or are living with someone who is sick on the day of their scheduled participation in a limited public Mass they should remain home.
 - d. Pastors will need to determine how to monitor attendance.
 - e. Parishioners who arrive for a limited public Mass are to maintain a six-foot distance between themselves and another individual or household group upon entering the church.
 - f. Parishioners are asked to wash their hands before leaving home. If available, hand sanitizer will be provided at the door of the place where Mass is celebrated.
 - g. Pastors are encouraged to mark seating areas to help parishioners identify the six-foot distancing guideline.
 - h. Those attending will be encouraged to wear a face mask.
 - i. The ministers for the Mass should be limited to those who are essential, allowing more parishioners to attend. All trained liturgical ministers of the parish should have the opportunity to minister if that is their desire. Liturgical ministers are included in the number permitted based on the capacity of the worship space and proper social distancing. Liturgical ministers are encouraged to wear masks except during the moments when their ministry would be inhibited by them.

- j. If a collection is taken, baskets could be placed at the entrance and parishioners encouraged to place their offering there as they arrive or depart.
- k. The Sign of Peace will be offered verbally only.
- l. Pastors are encouraged to consecrate only the number of hosts needed for each limited public Mass.
- m. For the distribution of Communion, parishioners will be encouraged to form a single file line, maintaining six-foot distance between each individual or family group. Each priest, deacon or extraordinary minister of Holy Communion is encouraged to wear a mask while giving Communion to the faithful. Communion may be given in the hand or on the tongue. Reception in the hand is encouraged¹ because a safe distance will be maintained if both priest and parishioner extending their hands full length. Those who wish to receive on the tongue should place themselves at the end of the line and remain as far from the person distributing Communion as is possible. Those distributing Communion might consider having sanitizer present for use as needed.
- n. Pastors may also choose to have sanitizer present for the parishioners near the Communion station and ask them to use it just before receiving.
- o. If a priest is concerned about his own health, he may have a deacon, or an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion distribute communion.)
- p. Following the limited public Masses, parishioners will maintain safe distance practices as they exit.
- q. The places where the parishioners have been seated will be sanitized following Mass.
- r. Congregating in the church following the limited public Mass is strongly discouraged.
- s. Parishioners are encouraged to wash their hands when they arrive at home.

¹ In those parishes that celebrate the Latin Rite in which Communion in the hand is not allowed, pastors will need to determine the best way to distribute communion.