



## *Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon* **OFFICE OF THE BISHOP**

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Updated March 11, 2021

### **DIRECTIVES FOR SACRAMENTS IN COVID-19**

Dear Pastors, Parish Life Directors, and Faithful of the Diocese of Saskatoon:

Please find the following compiled and updated directives for Sacraments during Covid-19. These directives apply to all ministry and worship spaces, even those not in a parochial setting, i.e. chapels, oratories, and any other liturgical worship space. Note these relate primarily to the Liturgy and Sacraments. Please refer to the Government of Saskatchewan [Public Health Orders](#) and the [Re-Open Saskatchewan Plan](#) to find additional information and guidelines with respect to events outside the congregational setting. Please also see the Government of Saskatchewan [News](#) for announcements.

Profound gratitude is expressed to all who persevered in faith and charity during these times of challenge, offering the Sacraments, ministry and support in the many creative ways you have reached out to your people.

### **Compiled Directives for Covid-19**

1. The faithful continue to be dispensed from the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays **and holy days of obligation.**
  - a. Those who are at risk because of an underlying health issue or who are 65 or older are strongly encouraged, for their own health, to avoid the risk of attending public celebrations of the Mass.
  - b. We encourage parishes to continue to live-stream Mass as they have been doing so those unable to attend in person can maintain a spiritual connection with their local parish.
2. **Beginning March 19, 2021, the total number of people participating in a liturgy cannot exceed 30 per cent of seating capacity or 150 people, whichever is less.**
3. **Concurrent services in other rooms within the facility are not permitted.**
4. A system of registration is recommended.
5. Churches can be open for prayer. Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament may take place provided at least one person remains present throughout.
6. The Sacrament of Reconciliation can be offered in accordance with the following:
  - a. Confessionals may be used if satisfying the requirements of personal distancing.
  - b. Alternative spaces should be made ready that allow for protection of the seal of the sacrament as well as personal distancing.
7. Baptisms may take place in accordance with the following:

- a. All of the directives concerning capacity and social distancing should be observed.
  - b. The priest is to wear a mask when close proximity is necessary for the baptism.
  - c. Water should be blessed in a separate receptacle (large pitcher) and poured over each candidate.
  - d. Anointing may be done with a cotton swab or purify hands between each anointing.
8. Holy water fonts are to remain empty until further notice.
  9. Hand sanitizer and/or alternate sanitizing options should be available throughout the church.
  10. Couples or families from the same household may sit together and are to maintain a personal distancing of two meters (six-feet) between their family and other families or individuals while in the church.
  11. Appropriate and adequate signage should be posted indicating the requirement of distancing and maximum numbers.
  12. Pews, door handles and knobs, restrooms and high traffic areas of the church are to be wiped down and sanitized, with the removal of trash and other items from the pews, at regular intervals.
  13. Those who are symptomatic, who have potentially been exposed to another with the virus, or have travelled out of country within the last 14 days, are not permitted to enter the church, in accordance with national, provincial and local health directives.
  - 14. Non-ceremonial meetings are permitted in groups no larger than 30 as long as physical distancing can be maintained. No food or beverage is allowed.**
  - 15. No concurrent meetings or meetings may take place at the same time as worship services.**

## MASS PROVISIONS

### BEFORE MASS

1. In order to maintain personal distancing and reduce the spread of the virus, parishes will need to enact the following:
  - a. For the purposes of social distancing, Masses should take place in the larger church and not small chapels.
  - b. Parishes may need to consider temporarily adjusting or adding to their Mass schedule.
  - c. Parishes are permitted to only allow the maximum permitted number of persons to access / enter the church, including the priest and ministry volunteers. This may require communicating to the people in advance of the Liturgy.
  - d. A system of pre-registration is recommended.**
  - e. Contact Tracing:**
    - i. For the purposes of contact tracing, places of worship are required to collect and maintain a list of people that are present within their facilities for any purposes. Contact details must include date, time, name, address, and phone number or email address. (If details are available through parishioner registration the attendee name will suffice.)**

- ii. **When collecting contact details, avoid the sharing of pens or other common touch instruments unless disinfected between each use.**
  - iii. **Contact registration lists must be maintained confidentially by the place of worship and destroyed after 30 days.**
- f. There should be a guarantee of two meters (six feet) distance between households attending Mass and other celebrations. Considerations should be made given the layout of each particular church.
2. Appropriate cleaning of high use areas within the church is to be done before and after each service.
  3. All hymnals and missalettes are to be removed from the pews and stored for the duration of the pandemic. No other materials may be left in the pews. The faithful are encouraged to bring their own liturgical resources for use during the celebration of Mass. Single-use materials can be considered.
  4. Doors may be propped or held open to prevent people from touching the door handles, knobs or push plates.
  5. An announcement may need to be made before Mass about personal distancing, the collection, reception of Communion, and other protocols.

### **DURING MASS**

1. Please refer to the Re-open Saskatchewan Plan for full guidelines for Places of Worship.
2. Staff, ushers or other volunteers should assist where needed. As previously indicated, attendance will be limited to assure compliance with social distancing requirements.
3. Families are to maintain six-foot distancing between their family and other families or individuals throughout the celebration of Mass.
4. Masking for all parishes and ministry:
  - a. All individuals require masks at all times with the exception of individuals under the age of two and those whose particular medical condition prevents them from wearing a mask as determined by a health professional.
  - b. Masks are required for cantors, singers and soloists.
  - c. Speakers at podiums are not required to wear their mask while speaking to the congregation provided that there is a minimum 3 meters (10 feet) between the speaker and others. This means a priest and/or lectors are not required to use a mask provided that they are at least 3 meters (10 feet) from other members of the congregation.
5. If contacted by more than one minister, the kissing of the Lectionary or Book of the Gospels is to be omitted. The priest or deacon may substitute this with another form of veneration such as a reverent bow of the head.
6. The procession at the Preparation of the Gifts is temporarily suspended. Collection baskets (or any other materials) are not to be passed from one family to another, nor shall ushers take up the collection from the congregation. Stationary baskets are to be used for donations from the assembly and are to be monitored by the ushers until the donations are collected and handled according to the proper protocols.

7. The Sign of Peace may be omitted entirely, or done with a simple gesture, such as a reverent bow, there is to be no physical contact.
8. It is recommended that separate chalices be prepared for each concelebrating priest and/or deacon.
9. Mass is generally to be celebrated without servers at the altar.
10. A priest or deacon considered high-risk is permitted to refrain from distributing Holy Communion and may delegate distribution to an extraordinary minister of Communion where necessary. Extraordinary Ministers of Communion may also be used where necessary due to time and the number of communicants. Proper distancing and Communion lines will need to be considered.
11. **When video live-streaming Mass, Communion is to be distributed following Mass. Alternatively, Communion may be distributed to the faithful at the ordinary time within the Mass, however the video must not capture the distribution.**
12. When deemed pastorally and practically necessary, the distribution of Communion to the faithful may be administered following Mass. When this happens, it is to take place after the Communion Prayer and Final Blessing following Mass, which has the following advantages:
  - a. Allows for additional precautions while maintaining liturgical integrity of the Mass;
  - b. Provides additional time for navigating and distributing Communion while allowing any live-streams to cease for privacy and in the interest of time; and
  - c. Gives freedom to the faithful to determine whether or not they receive.To carry this out please note the following:
  - d. A sufficient number of hosts should be consecrated during the Mass in a separate covered ciborium placed on a corporal at a distance on the altar.
  - e. The priest would consume the Eucharist in the usual way and return the newly consecrated hosts to the tabernacle (where practical).
13. For the distribution of Communion, ushers or other volunteers may assist to ensure six-foot distancing in the Communion line. Floor markings may be placed six feet apart in the aisles to facilitate proper social distancing during Communion.
14. The priest must wear a mask and must sanitize his hands immediately before and after distributing Communion. Physical contact should be avoided when placing the host in the communicant's hands. Sanitize intermittently as necessary.
15. **Communicants are to receive the Eucharist, step aside to remove their mask to consume, and replace the mask immediately after.**
16. Distribution of the Holy Communion (Blood of Christ) from the chalice is prohibited to the assembly. For those who are gluten intolerant, special arrangements are to be made with the pastor.
17. The communicant is not permitted to self-communicate, even by means of intinction. Concelebrating priests may receive by intinction.
18. **Those who choose to receive on the tongue must be the last to receive and must do so under the following conditions:**
  - a. Those receiving on the tongue, after responding 'Amen', are asked to extend their tongue far enough so that the Sacred Host can be placed on the tongue.

- This is to prevent the host from falling and in order for the priest to avoid any contact with the communicant.
- b. The priest must disinfect between communicants with the exception of those receiving from the same household which should be done as follows:
    - i. Dilute fingers in bowl of water (so as not to profane the Eucharist by rubbing sanitizer/mixing with crumbs from the Host);
    - ii. Dry hand on towel (if need be); and
    - iii. Sanitize prior to proceeding to give Communion to the next household.
19. Those who refrain from receiving communion still unite themselves with the sacrifice of Christ. Non-communicants are kindly asked to remain in their places rather than process to request a blessing.
20. The faithful may depart after making a brief prayer of thanksgiving.
21. When Holy Communion occurs after the end of Mass, special attention needs to be given to devotion to the Holy Eucharist. In particular, persons who receive Holy Communion should take some deliberate quiet devotional time before proceeding to exit the Church and/or encouraging others following the Mass.
22. With the delegation and commissioning of the Pastor, Extraordinary Ministers of Communion may take Communion to the sick, elderly, or home-bound on an individual basis, in accordance with all protocols of the Government of Saskatchewan and the protocols in place by governing body of the facility, if applicable.

### AFTER MASS

1. Families and individuals should depart the church in an organized manner and observing six feet of distance between other households. Ushers or ministers of hospitality may need to direct this process.
2. Ushers are not to hand out bulletins or other materials.
3. Clergy and other ministers may only greet parishioners as they exit the church if they can maintain social distancing and avoid physical contact.
4. No food or drink may be present or served.
5. Pews and other high traffic areas of the church are to be wiped down before the next service, with the removal of trash and other items from the pews.
6. Restroom facilities and door handles, push plates, and knobs are to be sanitized after each service.

## PROVISIONS FOR OTHER SACRAMENTS

### CONFIRMATIONS AND FIRST COMMUNIONS

Confirmations and First Communions postponed by the directive of March 15, 2020, can be scheduled.

1. With these directives, I hereby grant delegation to all pastors/administrators to celebrate the Sacrament of Confirmation (along with First Eucharist) for those baptized Catholic as infants or children whose Confirmation was postponed due to the pandemic **until June 30, 2021, only**. (I may be available upon request.)



In all things we are *rooted in Christ*,  
in His desire to bring God's love to all peoples.

2. Pastors/administrators and their pastoral leadership team, should determine when and how First Communions and Confirmation should be scheduled and celebrated so that they are in total compliance with all the provisions of Phase Three and all those who were to receive First Communion and Confirmation during the time of postponement will do so **by June 30, 2021**.
3. In order to comply with limited capacity and personal distancing, it is recommended that a limited number of those to receive Confirmation and First Communion be scheduled during Sunday Masses or other designated times until all have celebrated the Sacraments. (See Mass Provisions above.)
4. Pastors may choose to defer Confirmations and First Eucharist Celebrations for this year and have them take place with the 2021 Celebrations.
5. Due to the separation of First Communion and Confirmation as announced in the Age of Sacrament of Confirmation letter dated July 8, 2020, pastors can also choose to carryout First Eucharist Celebrations but defer Confirmations to 2021.

### **RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS**

*The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* (paragraphs 26-30) envisions exceptional circumstances when the normal celebration of initiation at the Easter Vigil may not take place.

During the time of delay, it is crucial that catechists, sponsors and godparents remain in contact with the catechumens and candidates. Accordingly, when Phase Three begins, and adhering to all Phase Three provisions, the following applies:

1. At least one Scrutiny should be celebrated, either at Sunday Mass or at another time when convenient.
2. The Rites of Initiation are to be celebrated in their entirety according to RCIA.
3. It is not permitted to separate the Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism - Confirmation - First Eucharist) for catechumens (elect) being fully initiated.
4. As far as possible, the sacraments of initiation are to be celebrated on a Sunday (or a Saturday evening anticipatory Mass), using, as occasion suggests, the Sunday Mass or one of the ritual Masses).
5. *Lucernarium* and Liturgy of the Word of the Easter Vigil are unique to the Vigil and are not to be celebrated outside of the Easter Vigil itself.

### **CONFIRMATION OF ADULT CATHOLICS**

I hereby grant delegation to pastors to confirm adult baptized Catholics (18+) **until April 4, 2021**. (I may be available upon request.)

### **RECEPTION INTO FULL COMMUNION**

Priests may celebrate the "Reception Into Full Communion" at any appropriate time during the year, preferably on a Sunday, according to RCIA, 487. Delegation to confirm is not required.

Note that the “Confirmation of Adult Catholics” and the “Reception Into Full Communion” should not be done at the same liturgical celebration as the full initiation of the catechumens.

### **RITE OF ACCEPTANCE INTO THE ORDER OF CATECHUMENS**

Due to the pandemic, the requirement for a full year catechumenate may be shortened for 2021 only. The Rite of Acceptance should be celebrated as soon as possible after public worship resumes, at least six months before Easter, 2021.

## **Covid-19 Occurrence Protocol**

Should a pastor become aware of positive Covid-19 case within the parish or potential contact with a Covid-19 carrier, please contact Saskatchewan Public Health at 1-855-559-5502 and follow any instruction provided. Should you become symptomatic call the HealthLine at 811. Reference protocols for handling an infection or contact can be found at the link below.

Concurrently with the notice provided to the Health Authorities, contact Patrick Clarke, Human Resources Manager, at [pclarke@rcdos.ca](mailto:pclarke@rcdos.ca) 306-659-5835 or Heather Fiolleau, Executive Assistant to the Bishop, at [hdfiolleau@rcdos.ca](mailto:hdfiolleau@rcdos.ca) 306-659-5824 to notify the Diocese of the situation. Further instruction may be provided based on an assessment of the pastor/parish circumstance.

## **Conclusion and Reference Documents**

Prior directives and updates can be found on our website at the following link:  
[Covid-19 Updates for the Diocese of Saskatoon](#)

Additional information from the Government of Saskatchewan can be found here:  
[Current Public Health Orders](#)  
[Re-Open Saskatchewan Plan](#)  
[COVID-19 Cleaning and Disinfection for Public Facilities](#)  
[Self-Assessment Tool](#)  
[Protocols for Handling an Infection or Contact](#)

Again, I thank pastors, parish communities and faithful of the Diocese of Saskatoon for their patience and consideration throughout this time. Everyone has done an extraordinary job in continuing ministry and reaching out to keep prayerful communication with so many.

Sincerely in Christ,



✠ Most Reverend Mark A. Hagemoen