



Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon
OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

123 Nelson Rd
Saskatoon SK S7S 1H1
www.rcdos.ca

Phone: 306-242-1500
Fax: 306-244-6010
Toll free: 877-661-5005



May 15, 2020
Friday of the Fifth Week of Easter

DIRECTIVES FOR RESUMPTION OF SACRAMENTS IN COVID-19

Dear Pastors and Parish Life Directors:

One of the most difficult sacrifices for Catholics during this time of pandemic has been the suspension of all celebrations of the sacraments, including and especially the celebration of the Liturgy of the Eucharist. The faithful hunger for the Body of Christ and the presence of the Lord in the Sacraments; pastors of souls yearn for the presence of Christ found in the gathering of God's holy people. Although eager to return to our churches, the process must be executed in a safe and measured way.

The purpose of these directives is to provide a roadmap for a gradual return of the People of God to font and table, reconciliation and healing. What follows supersedes previous directives issued in the Diocese of Saskatoon on March 10, 2020, and March 17, 2020. All pastors, parochial administrators, chaplains and all other leadership personnel are to follow these directives. The timing for the enactment of each of the three phases noted below will be announced by the Diocese of Saskatoon in coordination with the requirements of civil authorities regarding public health in this pandemic.

As we appear to be operative in the larger society, there will need to be a gradual re-opening and thus these directives are prepared in three phases. In issuing these directives, it is understood that the possibility still exists that every parish may not be able to offer Mass open to the public due to, but not limited to:

- factors including the vulnerability of the priest himself;
- an inability to safely provide the additional personnel needed;
- an inability to sufficiently sanitize worship spaces between uses; and/or
- other circumstances.

These guidelines apply to all worship spaces, even those not in a parochial setting, i.e. chapels, oratories, and any other liturgical worship space. Religious, monastic or cloistered communities may celebrate the Mass as is their custom provided the priest presiding is a resident chaplain. If anyone from outside the community joins them, then the provisions below are in force.

Profound gratitude is expressed to all who persevered in faith and charity during these times of challenge, offering live streaming of your liturgy and prayer life and the many, many other creative ways you have reached out to your people.

PHASE ONE – Currently in Place

Phase One is currently in effect under the following provisions and those of the current Public Health Order from the Government of Saskatchewan.

1. Bishop Hagemoen continues to dispense the faithful from the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays.
2. Churches can be open for prayer during designated hours. Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament may take place at this time provided one person remains present throughout.
3. Those who are symptomatic, who have potentially been exposed to another with the virus, or have travelled out of country within the last within 14 days, are not permitted to enter the church, in accordance with national, provincial and local health directives.
4. Holy water fonts are to remain empty until further notice.
5. Hand sanitizer and/or alternate sanitizing options should be available throughout the church.
6. Public celebrations of liturgies, devotions, celebrations or other group gatherings are not permitted at this time.
7. 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.
8. Appropriate and adequate signage should be posted indicating the requirement of distancing and maximum numbers.
9. 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.
10. The Sacrament of Reconciliation can be offered at specified times.
 - 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.
11. Eucharistic celebrations continue limited to the priest and the most necessary number of individuals assisting only if the Mass is being livestreamed and following all provisions of the civil authorities.
12. Funerals and weddings are permitted where necessary in consultation with the pastor and in accordance to all restrictions and guidelines of the Government of Saskatchewan.

PHASE TWO – May 22, 2020

Phase Two is projected to commence on May 22, 2020. Parishes and ecclesiastical communities should not take it upon themselves to implement these phases without notice and authorization.

1. Bishop Hagemoen continues to dispense the faithful from the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays.
2. All the provisions for Phase One remain in force.
3. Churches are permitted to celebrate public Sunday and weekday Masses ONLY according to:
 - a. The specific and limited number of participants as determined by the civil authorities.
 - b. All the provisions for celebration of Mass as indicated below.
4. Baptisms may resume ONLY according to 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. Fonts are to remain empty until further notice. Water should be blessed in a separate receptacle (large pitcher) and poured over each candidate.
 - d. Anointings may be done with a cotton swab or purify hands between each anointing.
5. Additional prayer gatherings, devotions or groups are not permitted at this time.

PHASE THREE – TBD

The specific date for the commencement of Phase Three is yet to be determined. The determination will be made in compliance and consultation with provincial and local authorities. All gatherings are limited to the specified number by the government.

1. Bishop Hagemoen continues to dispense the faithful from the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays.
2. All provisions commenced in Phase Two and Mass Provisions outlined below remain in effect.
3. All other sacraments will resume in accordance with the provisions below until further notice.

MASS PROVISIONS

BEFORE MASS

1. Bishop Hagemoen continues to dispense the faithful from the obligation to attend Mass on Sunday.
 - a. Those who are symptomatic, who have been exposed to another with the virus, or have travelled outside the country in the past 14 days are not permitted to

- enter the church, in accordance with national, provincial and local health directives.
- b. 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.
 - c. We highly 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. 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 will require communicating to the people in advance of the liturgy.
 - d. A system of registration prior to Mass to determine who may enter needs to be established prior to parishioners at the doors of the church. All people in the parish should be aware of the invitation to attend a Mass and equal opportunity should be given.
 - e. There should be a guarantee of two meters (six feet) distance between households attending liturgy. Alternating pews should be blocked off. Other considerations should be made given the layout of each particular church.
 3. Appropriate cleaning of high use areas within the church is to be done before and after each service.
 - a. Pews utilized by the assembly should be wiped down before Mass.
 - b. 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. If feasible, parishes are encouraged to project hymns and responses on screens.
 4. Holy water fonts are to remain empty until further notice.
 5. The faithful are encouraged to wear a mask except when remaining in the pew.
 6. Doors should be propped or held open to prevent people from touching the door handles, knobs or push plates.
 7. An announcement may need to be made before Mass about personal distancing, the collection, reception of Communion, and other protocols.

DURING MASS

1. Staff, ushers or other volunteers should assist with directing people to pews specifically marked. As previously indicated, attendance will be limited to assure compliance with social distancing requirements.
2. Families are to maintain six-foot distancing between their family and other families or individuals throughout the celebration of Mass.

- a. One or two pews are to be left vacant in between rows such that six feet of distance can be maintained in all directions.
- b. Music ministers should be limited to allow for greater participation and are to maintain six-foot social distancing.
3. The entrance/recession processions should only be done if social distancing can be maintained.
4. 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.
5. The Sign of Peace may be omitted, or done with a simple gesture, such as a reverent bow, there is to be no physical contact.
6. It is recommended that separate chalices be prepared for each concelebrating priest and/or deacon.
7. Mass is to be celebrated without altar servers and extraordinary ministers of communion, however, 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.
8. The distribution of Communion is to take place 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 livestreams to cease; 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.
 - e. The priest would consume the Eucharist in the usual way and return the newly consecrated hosts to the tabernacle (where practical).
 - f. The priest may remove his chasuble and be vested in alb and stole.
 - g. The faithful may depart after making a brief prayer of thanksgiving.
9. 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.
10. 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.
11. Distribution of Holy Communion from the chalice is prohibited to the assembly. For those who are gluten intolerant, special arrangements are to be made with the pastor.
12. The communicant is not permitted to self-communicate, even by means of intinction. A deacon or concelebrating priest may receive by intinction.
13. Those who wish to receive communion on the tongue must be the last to receive if permitted by the pastor.

14. 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.

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. There are to be no receptions or social gatherings (e.g., coffee and doughnuts) following Mass.
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, may be scheduled once Phase Three has commenced

1. With these directives, **Bishop Hagemoen hereby grants 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 December 31, 2020, only.**
2. Once Phase Three has begun, 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 December 31, 2020.
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. Catechetical programs for those scheduled to receive Confirmation and First Communion the following year should commence at the usual time respecting and complying with any provisions in effect at that time.

6. Please note that there may be a further announcement by June 2020 regarding possible change re: the age of Confirmation in our diocese, which may also affect parish planning for this Sacrament in the near future.

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. The celebration of full initiation must occur at Mass on a Sunday (or Saturday evening). The Mass of the occurring Sunday is to be used. During Ordinary Time, but not on a Solemnity (e.g. The Most Holy Trinity or The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ), the Ritual Mass "Christian Initiation: Baptism" with its appropriate readings may be used.
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.

PENTECOST AND INITIATION

If Phase Three has begun, an appropriate day to celebrate initiation outside the Easter Vigil is the Vigil of Pentecost with the extended Vigil readings. (See *Lectioary for Mass*, #62)

CONFIRMATION OF ADULT CATHOLICS

The delegation for pastors to confirm adult (18+) Catholics baptized as children will be extended for two months beyond the resumption of public worship, even if this is beyond the end of the Easter Season.

For the year 2020 only, Bishop Hagemoen hereby grants delegation to pastors to confirm adult baptized Catholics (18+).

RECEPTION INTO FULL COMMUNION

When Phase Three begins, 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.

Conclusion and Reference Documents

Cleaning guidelines and other Covid-19 resources can be found on our website under “Resources and information” at the following link:
<https://rcdos.ca/2020/04/25/covid-19-updates/>

For more information regarding the resumption of Sacraments during this pandemic please see the attached Guidelines for Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon provided by the Diocesan Liturgy Committee.

Again, I thank you for all that you have done in your parishes to pray with and unite your parish communities. Everyone has done an extraordinary job in continuing ministry along with your pastoral ministers in reaching out to keep prayerful communication with so many.

Sincerely, in Christ,



✠ Most Reverend Mark A. Hagemoen
Bishop of Saskatoon