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Archdiocese of Los Angeles

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## Updated Liturgical Guidelines During the Coronavirus Pandemic Updated February 11, 2021

In response to recent Supreme Court rulings, the State of California amended its Blueprint for a Safer Economy on February 6, 2021 with respect to Places of Worship and Cultural Ceremonies. The updated guidelines can be found here: [State of California Guidance for Places of Worship](#).

### Indoor Worship Under the California Tier System

The updated guidelines now allow for indoor worship services with modifications according to the Tier status of each County. Los Angeles, Ventura, and Santa Barbara are currently in the Widespread (purple) Tier, which requires that indoor activities must be limited to 25% of capacity of the church.

The current Tier System is as follows:

#### Widespread (purple)

- Indoor with modifications
- Indoor activities must be limited to 25% of capacity

#### Substantial (red)

- Indoor with modifications
- Indoor activities must be limited to 25% of capacity

#### Moderate (orange)

- Indoor with modifications
- Indoor activities must be limited to 50% of capacity

#### Minimal (yellow)

- Indoor with modifications
- Indoor activities must be limited to 50% of capacity

The State of California indicated that it plans to issue further guidance soon and these Guidelines will be amended accordingly.

## Indoor Mass and Other Liturgical Celebrations

- Pastors must ensure that employees and volunteers adhere to the guidelines provided by the [CDC](#), [State of California](#), County Departments of Health (e.g., [Los Angeles County Appendix A “Protocol for Social Distancing”](#)) and/or City Offices regarding healthy hygiene practices and employee and volunteer training.
- [Appendix A](#) must be completely filled out and posted at all public entrances to the church building and the parish office for parishes within the County of Los Angeles.
- Masses (e.g., Weekday, Sunday, First Communions, Confirmation, Weddings, Funerals, Quinceañeras) and other religious services (e.g., Baptisms, Adoration, Devotions, Prayer Services, “Wedding Without Mass,” “Funeral Liturgy Outside Mass,”) are allowed.
- All parishes must provide room for social distancing of at least six feet between family units. Measures must be taken before-hand to assure attendance does not exceed 25% of capacity. Parishioners must wear facemasks and practice social distancing (6 feet apart, unless they are family members who live together in the *same* house).
- Presiders and Lectors must also wear face coverings unless speaking. However, they can also choose to wear face coverings even while they are speaking. If Presiders will be close to people for some specific reason (e.g., when administering the Sacraments) they must wear their facemasks.
- All microphones must be sanitized in between use if they are shared by multiple individuals.
- Cleaning materials should also be on hand to disinfect points of contact after each visitor departs. A disinfectant that will not harm church surfaces should be used. [See sanitizing protocol.](#)
- Hand sanitation must be available for all visitors. This could take several forms, ranging from touch-less dispensers of antibacterial gel at the doors or wash stations in restrooms.
- One or more volunteers (or employees) should be stationed at the door(s) of the church whenever it is open. The volunteer(s) will perform a variety of duties:
  - Greet all visitors. California state guidelines recommend signage and use of social media advising people experiencing symptoms or considered at higher risk to stay home, but volunteers/employees at the doors could reinforce this message and remind visitors of the ongoing dispensation from the Sunday obligation to attend Mass.
- In addition to [Appendix A](#), complete and post the State checklist found here: <https://files.covid19.ca.gov/pdf/checklist-places-of-worship--en.pdf>. Also, it is important to:
  - Train volunteers to ask people if they have been in contact with any infected person.
  - Remind anyone with symptoms to stay home.
  - Screenings also include asking whether the person is currently under an isolation or quarantine order, and if so asking them to please return home.
  - Parishes may also choose to use sign-in sheets for contact tracing.
  - Remind parishioners of the ongoing dispensation from the Sunday obligation to attend Mass.
- Open the door for visitors to keep the points of contact to a minimum. Ushers should utilize face mask and gloves.
- Count visitors as they enter, to ensure that the number of visitors at any given time does not exceed the 25% maximum capacity under your local fire code and related rules.

- Act as ushers, inviting each group to a particular part of the church, where they should remain (no roaming around the church), maintaining physical distance.
- Aisles within the area used for indoor services are designated as one-way to support physical distancing.
- Parishes are to observe the following protocols regarding music and singing for all Masses and liturgical celebrations:
  - Group singing must be discontinued at all Masses and religious services. Choirs or groups of singers of any size are not allowed during any Mass or religious service, whether indoors or outdoors.
  - Parishes that utilize a cantor during Mass outdoors must ensure that the cantor is properly screened for COVID-19 symptoms and always practices enhanced social distancing of at least 12 feet away from anyone else. The cantor should wear a facemask at all times.
  - Parishes that utilize a cantor indoors should follow all the same recommendations for cantors outdoors and, in addition, the cantor should remain in an isolated, separate or barrier protected location, as far from other people as reasonably possible. The cantor should wear a facemask at all times unless alone in a separate room.
  - Parishes can also choose to use instruments only. Instrumentalists must maintain physical distancing and use facemasks.
  - Wind and brass instruments should be avoided and are discouraged from use.
  - Congregations are not permitted to sing in the church and are discouraged from singing outdoors as well; they should be encouraged to pray silently with the music instead.
  - Parishes can also choose not to use a cantor or instrumentalist.
- Parishes are to observe the following protocols for all Masses and religious services:
  - The invitation to the Sign of Peace is omitted. No physical contact should be made during the Sign of Peace.
  - Do not pass collection baskets or receptacles for offerings during the preparation of the altar. Instead, baskets are to be placed in a location where people can provide their donations as they enter or exit the seating area.
  - No sharing of bibles, books, papers, or other items. If worship aids are used, they must be one-time use.
  - Holy Communion will be offered only in the form of bread, on the hand. The priest should sanitize his hands before offering Communion, after making any physical contact with someone while giving Communion, and after Communion has concluded.
  - Lines for Communion will be monitored so that communicants stand 6 feet apart and 6 feet distant from other participants in pews.
  - The distribution of Communion may take place at its usual time or immediately after the conclusion of Mass, using the form given in the *Rite for Holy Communion Outside of Mass*.
  - The priest should raise a host to the congregation and say, “The Body of Christ,” with the congregation responding, “Amen,” so as to minimize spoken interaction between the priest and the communicant during the distribution of Communion.
  - Masks must be worn during the distribution of Communion.

## Outdoor Mass and Other Liturgical Celebrations

- For Masses and other religious services held outdoors, please refer to the above and note the following:
  - Masses (e.g., Weekday, Sunday, First Communions, Confirmation, Weddings, Funerals, Quinceañeras) and other religious services (e.g., Baptisms, Adoration, Devotions, Prayer Services, “Wedding Without Mass,” “Funeral Liturgy Outside Mass,” Faith Formation, Prayer Groups) are safer when held outdoors. This is encouraged whenever possible.
  - There is no limit to attendance for outdoor religious services, provided there is room for social distancing of at least six feet between family units.
  - Even outdoors, parishioners must wear face coverings and practice social distancing (6 feet apart, unless they are family members who live together in the *same* house).

## Livestream Mass

- Mass may be held inside the church for the purpose of live-stream or recording.
- A Mass attended by congregants may also be live-streamed or recorded, whether indoors (if permitted by their respective County) or outdoors.
- Observing physical distancing, all those involved in the celebration of Mass must be in the same location and time as the Presider.
- Live-streamed Mass can be followed by outdoor distribution of Communion.

## Churches Open for Prayer

- Churches can open for private prayer, Adoration, indoor confession, or other devotions during the day, provided that physical distancing, facemask wearing, sanitizing procedures, and all other appropriate protocols are also observed. Staff and/or volunteers should be on-hand to ensure that protocols are observed by parishioners visiting for prayer.
- Churches can be opened to prayer groups, provided that attendance is limited to 25% of capacity and physical distancing, facemask wearing, sanitizing procedures, and all other appropriate protocols are also observed.
- Parishes should minimize potential points of contact (e.g., baptismal fonts and holy water containers at church entrances should be empty; hymnals and missalettes should be removed from pews; tapers should be removed from votive candle racks; frequently touched objects such as statues, etc., should be cordoned off).

## Confessions

In addition to what is provided above and applicable to the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, the following are also observed:

- Priests who are present may hear individual Confessions upon request or have scheduled Confession times. A location must be arranged, either in the body of the church (**not in a confessional**) or outdoors, so that confessions may be heard with safe distancing while maintaining privacy for the seal of the confession.
- Space must be provided for penitents to wait in line while maintaining safe distancing.
- Both priest and penitent must wear facemasks.

- The priest and penitent must remain at least 6 feet apart. They do not need to face one another. Ideally both will remain standing, so as to minimize points of contact. If priest and penitent are seated, they may sit side-by-side, facing in the same direction, so as to help maintain hygiene. Penitent's chair and other points of contact must be wiped down when penitent leaves. Priests should always be aware of maintaining privacy for the penitent.

## **Baptisms**

In addition to what is provided above and applicable to the celebration of the Sacrament of Baptism, the following are also observed:

- Immersion fonts will not be used to confer Baptism. Blessed water will be poured into smaller containers, and each person will be baptized with water poured from a different container. The water will not be reused. Dispose of excess water appropriately after the Baptism is finished.
- The proper Trinitarian formula must be used.
- The use of the Oil of Catechumens and the "Ephphatha" may be omitted. If not omitted, the minister may use an instrument (e.g., cotton ball, cotton swab, cotton pad) to apply the Oil. If an instrument is used to anoint with Oil, the instrument may not be reused; a new instrument must be used if there are multiple individuals. Once the instrument has been used it must be set aside and later burned as it contains Holy Oil.
- When using Sacred Chrism, the minister may also use an instrument (e.g., cotton ball, cotton swab, cotton pad) to apply the Sacred Chrism. The same conditions apply as noted in the previous bullet point.

## **Confirmations**

In addition to what is provided above and applicable to the celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation, parishes should also refer to the directives on the Memo sent to pastors on June 15, 2020 entitled, "Memo to Pastors and Administrators for Confirmation 2020 (COVID 19)".

## **Weddings/Funerals/Quinceañeras**

Refer to what is provided observing all appropriate protocols.

## **Anointing of the Sick**

As in important part of ministry, priests are to attend to the needs of those who ask for the Anointing of the Sick.

- If a priest is sick or considered to be a high-risk individual (e.g., above 65 years of age, suffers from respiratory conditions, immunocompromised, etc.), he should request assistance from another priest.
- Priests attending to the needs of the sick or homebound are to observe all proper sanitizing procedures. If in a hospital setting, check-in with proper medical personnel and follow their directions before entering and upon leaving the room of the patient. For home visits, this includes but may not be limited to handwashing before and after the visit, wearing gloves, a facemask, and a gown to cover clothes.
- Priests must clean and refresh their oil stocks before visiting each sick person.

- Instead of using his hand, the priest may use an instrument, such as cotton-tipped swab or cotton ball, to anoint the sick person (cf. *CIC* 1000, §2). The priest dips the cotton-tipped swab or cotton ball in the oil to administer the Sacrament. Please take care of using only one swab per person and dispose of the instrument appropriately (e.g., by burning or burying in the ground).
- If desired by the person requesting the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick, priests may hear the confession of the sick person and grant individual absolution.
- If you find out that you have been exposed to the coronavirus, immediately contact your health care provider. As a result, you may be required to quarantine yourself. In addition, report all positive COVID-19 cases to the Archdiocese using the form located here under COVID-19 Report in the Archdiocesan Handbook: [COVID-19 Reporting](#). In the event that a positive COVID-19 case involves an employee or clergy, written notice must be given within one business day to all other employees who have been at the same worksite.

## Parish Offices

- Face coverings must be worn by staff working in cubicles, including cubicles equipped with partitions. The only exceptions are for staff working alone in a private office with the door closed, or any staff while eating or drinking.
- At all times when eating or drinking, staff must maintain a 6-foot distance from others and should do so outdoors. Eating or drinking at a cubicle or workstation is preferred to eating in a breakroom.
- [Entry screenings](#) are conducted before employees or visitors may enter the workspace. Checks must include a check-in concerning cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing and fever or chills and if the employee is currently under isolation or quarantine orders. These checks can be done remotely or in person upon the employees' arrival. A temperature check should also be done at the worksite if feasible.
- Report all positive COVID-19 cases to the Archdiocese using the form located here under COVID-19 Report in the Archdiocesan Handbook: [COVID-19 Reporting](#). In the event that a positive COVID-19 case involves an employee or clergy, written notice must be given within one business day to all other employees who have been at the same worksite.
- In the event that 3 or more cases are identified within the workplace (including cases among staff, clergy and/or congregants) within a span of 14 days the employer must report this cluster to the Department of Public Health at (888) 397-3993 or (213) 240-7821. If a cluster is identified at a worksite, the Department of Public Health will initiate a cluster response which includes providing infection control guidance and recommendations, technical support, and site-specific control measures. A public health case manager will be assigned to the cluster investigation to help guide the facility response.