

Phase II Guidelines: Public Masses with Moderate Limits on Public Gatherings and Moderate Physical Distancing

The liturgy draws us all closer into union with Christ. As such, the Diocese of Green Bay remains fully committed to the restoration of public Mass. As we continue to monitor closely the recommendations and protocol issued by the Bishop, in consultation with the Presbyteral Council, Regional Vicars and health care professionals, we are working toward a graduated process for the safe and healthy restoration of public Mass. The following diocesan guidelines are intended to help parishes provide an opportunity for the faithful to encounter Christ in the liturgy of the Church while abiding by reasonable and proportional measures to limit the spread of disease and care for the most vulnerable among us.

General Provisions

1. The dispensation from the Sunday Obligation of the Mass remains during Phase II. The faithful should use their best judgement as to whether or not to attend. During this phase a person may choose to refrain from attending Mass for any reason; however, Catholics who are not sick or frail due to illness or age are encouraged to return to Mass.
2. Those who are showing symptoms of illness such as a cough or fever, even if not COVID related, in the spirit of Christian charity, should remain at home. If possible, a visit from a priest, deacon, or extraordinary minister of Holy Communion may be arranged to bring the Eucharist to these individuals.
3. Masks are encouraged for all those attending. All ushers assisting should wear a mask and abide by social distancing guidelines.

Limiting the Size of the Congregation & Social Distancing

4. Masses may be scheduled with greater frequency if needed.
5. Pastoral discretion should be used to determine how to restrict attendance up to 25% of church capacity. Some suggestions would be to organize attendance by a first-come, first-served basis; to create a rotation system based on the first letter of last names; or to utilize an online ticketing system like Eventbrite, etc..
6. Ushers should be stationed at the entrances of the church in order to help direct traffic and to help the faithful keep 6 feet from each other while entering and exiting the building. (Members of a single household may enter and exit together, since they do not need to practice physical distancing with each other.)
7. Having a Choir at Mass is discouraged, especially if its members are seated together. Vigorous singing, especially in close proximity to others, may increase the risk of viral spread. A musician and cantor may be appropriate as long as they remain 6 feet apart.

Specific Provisions for the Parts of the Mass

8. A priest with a respiratory infection of any kind should avoid celebrating public masses or administering sacraments during this phase. The same holds for other ministers who might serve at a Mass (deacon, servers, readers...).
9. It is assumed that the ministers in the sanctuary will be six feet away from the faithful so they should not wear masks or gloves during the celebration of Mass.

10. The offertory procession (bringing up the gifts) should be omitted. Special provision should be made for the collection.
 - a. Baskets should not be passed from person to person. Long-handled baskets could be acceptable if the ushers can remain a suitable distance from others and are sanitized after use.
 - b. Central boxes or collection points where the faithful can place their contributions could be made available.
11. If hosts for the communion of the faithful are to be consecrated, they could be placed on a second corporal towards the side of the altar. This allows the priest to speak the words of consecration directly over the host he will consume, with the other hosts on the altar but not directly in front of the priest as he speaks the Eucharistic prayer.
12. For the elevation of the sacred species at “Through him, and with him, and in him ,” if a deacon is present, he may stand alongside the priest and elevate the chalice.
13. The invitation to the faithful to exchange a sign of peace should be omitted.

The Distribution of Holy Communion

14. At the start of Mass, or at a suitable point during Mass, the priest should explain that those who desire to receive Holy Communion may do so at the appropriate moment, but that those who wish not to receive may remain in their places. He should add that the faithful should maintain a 6-foot distance from each other as they come forward for Holy Communion.
15. The Precious Blood will not be distributed to the faithful. A deacon or concelebrant should not receive from the same cup as the celebrant. The celebrant could offer the Cup for the concelebrant to intinct and then should consume the Precious Blood and purify the vessel himself.
16. Holy Communion should be distributed by one minister only. In most circumstances this will be the priest or the deacon. However, for a serious reason, an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion can be asked by the priest to distribute in his place or to assist. The minister/s of the Eucharist should wear a mask when distributing Holy Communion.
17. Holy Communion may not be distributed with gloves, nor may it be received in the hand if a member of the faithful is wearing gloves.
 - a. The ordinary and extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist should perform proper hand hygiene (e.g., with hand sanitizer) immediately before and after distributing Holy Communion. (Proper hand hygiene is effective against the virus.)
 - b. If at any point the minister of Holy Communion touches a communicant’s hand or tongue, proper hand hygiene should be practiced immediately before continuing the distribution of Holy Communion.
18. Though it should be strongly encouraged that the faithful receive Holy Communion in the hand, provisions should be made so that anyone who wishes to receive on the tongue may do so. If the faithful desire to receive on the tongue, they should receive from the priest. If the priest, does not feel comfortable with this, he may delegate another ordinary or extraordinary minister of the Eucharist to distribute to those who wish to receive on the tongue.
19. The faithful receive Holy Communion in the normal way. A single file line is encouraged. If there is a double line, there must be a 6’ distance between the lines.

20. At the conclusion of the distribution of Holy Communion, the priest (and any other ministers) return the remaining hosts to the tabernacle, and then perform hand hygiene (e.g., with hand sanitizer).
21. The Mass concludes as normal.