

Church of St. Dominic Liturgical COVID-19 Preparedness Plan

I. General Guidelines

- A. Our first consideration must continue to be for the spiritual and physical health of our parishioners and those whom they encounter, especially the most vulnerable: the elderly and those with chronic illnesses. We continue to rely on medical professionals and governmental standards to inform these directives.
- B. The obligation to attend Sunday Mass and Holy Days of Obligation continues to be suspended for as long as the pandemic continues.
- C. All COVID-19 positive persons, those who are symptomatic, and those living with them, must stay home.
- D. Persons over age 65 and those with preexisting health conditions should continue to stay home during Phase II and avoid public gatherings, including in church.
- E. All the faithful should continue to follow hygienic practices at home: wash hands often, avoid touching the face, cover coughs and sneezes, etc.

II. Safety and Hygiene in Our Worship Spaces

- A. We will be closing all entrances to the church building except for the main entrance doors. The lower level of the church will be locked and unavailable. Churchgoers will follow signage and enter using the main entrance.
- B. Hand sanitizer will be available at the entrance, but attendees are encouraged to bring and use their own, as our supplies are limited. High use areas will be wiped down with disinfectant before and after each liturgy, including pews, chairs, ambos, handrails, doorknobs, and push plates.
- C. Churchgoers will be encouraged to use the restroom prior to arriving at Church for Mass. We will be limiting restroom use to one person/household group at a time, and all but one restroom stall will be closed to help with ease of sanitization. Restrooms will be sanitized after each liturgy and at other regular intervals.
- D. Hymnals, missalettes, and other commonly held items (e.g. children's toys) will continue to be removed and stored during the pandemic.
- E. Bulletins will be available in print form, but will not be handed out. The faithful may pick up copies on the way out of church. They are also available electronically on the parish website.
- F. In lieu of worship aids, text for the liturgy will continue to be projected onto the screens.
- G. Baptismal fonts and holy water stoups will remain empty. Fresh water will be used and blessed for each Baptism, and after each Baptism holy water will be disposed of in the sacarium.

H. Altar vessels will continue to be washed after each Mass in hot soapy water.

I. All liturgical vestments, including albs, will be regularly cleaned.

J. The liturgical environment will reflect the liturgical season but we will keep decorations at a minimum (less surfaces to clean or attract germs).

K. The COVID-19 Preparedness Plan Administrator will ensure that all aspects of the Plan are observed in the worship space: hand sanitizers and cleaning supplies are well-stocked, liturgical personnel are observing social distancing, staff and volunteers are trained for their responsibilities, etc.

III. Social Distancing within the Church

A. During Phase II, the maximum number of persons admitted into our sanctuary will be limited to 170 persons.

B. Each person must remain 6 feet away in all directions from others not in the same household. This also applies to the chapel and other rooms on site.

C. We will tape or mark as not available two of every three pews, indicating where people may not sit with signage and/or tape.

D. Ushers will direct the faithful as to where they should sit in the sanctuary. Each household group will be shown where they are to sit. The sanctuary will be seated as follows: center section from front to back, south section from front to back, then north section from front to back. This will ensure that we do not exceed capacity limits without the need to count each person. If the sanctuary reaches capacity, extra chairs may be set up by the ushers in the social hall, still allowing for distancing between household groups. If this area reaches capacity, ushers will disallow further entry and encourage people to come to a later liturgy or participate virtually from home.

E. Face masks are strongly urged for all assembly members (but not for those under age two, according to the CDC, since it may put them at risk of suffocation).

F. Nursery and Children's Liturgy are suspended at this time.

G. Ushers will limit restroom use to one person or household group at a time. Tape will be placed on the floor outside to indicate where people should keep 6 feet distant from each other while waiting in line.

H. Holy Communion

1. Communion will be distributed during Mass only to those few ministers in the sanctuary. The remaining faithful will be offered Communion after Mass following the protocols below.

2. The Precious Blood is not distributed to the faithful from the chalice. Those who for medical reasons are unable to receive the host should contact the pastor and make special arrangements.

3. The Communion distributors will apply hand sanitizer before and after Communion and wear face masks.

4. The faithful will wear masks during distribution of Communion, except when consuming the Host.

5. The faithful should receive Communion in the hand. The Communion distributor and the communicant should extend hands to keep as much distance as possible between them and keep hands still to avoid inadvertent touching.

6. Those unable to receive Communion in the hand may discuss the matter with the pastor to seek an alternative.

7. Wearing gloves to distribute Communion is not permitted, nor is using tongs or other instruments, plastic baggies, cups, pre-packaged containers, or any other unapproved vessels.

8. The faithful may not wear gloves when receiving Communion in the hand, nor receive it in a paper tissue, plate, cup, or other disposable item.

I. Liturgies that would crowd church buildings will be adjusted to ensure smaller numbers. There will be no gatherings before or after and no food or drink will be served in the church building.

1. The COVID Plan Administrator will work with the pastor and the director of Faith Formation to determine how First Communion and Confirmations will be conducted in accordance with guidelines from the Archdiocese.

2. The rites of the Order of Christian Burial (vigil service, funeral Mass, Commendation) may be celebrated provided social distancing is observed. We will not have visitations at the church during this time.

3. Weddings may be celebrated (including outdoors on church property during the pandemic), provided social distancing is observed; the bride and groom may be closer than 6 feet.

4. Baptisms may be celebrated outside of the Mass and will follow guidelines set forth by the Archdiocese.

J. Gatherings on church grounds before or after Mass are not allowed during Phase II.

IV. Returning to Worship

A. Choice of Mass

1. The course of the Liturgical Year will be maintained and the primacy of Sunday will be respected, even for those unable to attend in person.

2. If attending Sunday Mass is impossible or inadvisable, the faithful may instead attend Mass on a weekday with smaller crowds.

B. Liturgical Ministers

1. At this time, we are limiting the filling of liturgical roles to those who are under 65 years of age.

2. Ushers will be trained in how to enact the new directives, including how to deal gently with uncertainty during the first few weeks.

3. Training will be provided to those in other liturgical roles prior to resuming the celebration of public Masses.

4. Altar servers will not be used during this Phase.

C. Music Ministry

1. Congregational singing is temporarily discontinued, since singing expels more respiratory particles than speaking does. We will use recorded music during the distribution of Holy Communion, and all other responses will be spoken. Congregants will respond to all spoken texts while wearing masks.

2. Choirs and all other musical groups are discontinued until it is safe to resume, including rehearsals.

3. Exceptions may be made for special events, such as weddings, in coordination with the COVID-19 Plan Administrator.

V. Celebrating the Liturgy

A. Preparations Before Mass

1. Priests, deacons, and all liturgical ministers will wear face masks, use hand sanitizer, and observe hygienic practices before and after Mass.

2. Bread and wine will be placed on the credence table.

3. The location of the Presider's Chair and other seats in the sanctuary will account for social distancing.

4. Liturgical ministers in the sanctuary need not wear face masks during Mass, provided they remain more than 6 feet apart, but will wear them when distributing Communion.

B. Parts of the Mass

1. The Introductory Rites

a. Processions through the assembly at the beginning and end of Mass will not occur.

b. The Roman missal will be placed upon the altar.

2. The Liturgy of the Word

a. One lector will be used per Mass, and they will minimize contact with the ambo while reading.

b. The book and binder for readings/petitions will be placed on the ambo before Mass.

3. The Liturgy of the Eucharist

a. There will be no collections taken up during Mass. The faithful may drop their offerings into the containers on the way in/out of church. Online giving is encouraged.

b. The bread and wine will be brought to the altar from the credence table by the priest.

c. The ciboria with hosts for the assembly will be placed on a corporal distant from the presider to minimize his breathing on them.

d. Since there are no altar servers, the priest will wash his own hands, after which he will also apply hand sanitizer.

e. There will be no holding of hands during the Lord's Prayer, except for between members of the same household. The Sign of Peace will be omitted.

4. Distribution of Holy Communion

a. The priest alone will drink from the chalice; it will not be offered to anyone else. Priests and deacons will purify their own vessels, after which they should apply hand sanitizer.

b. The Extraordinary Ministers of Communion will distribute communion amongst themselves after sanitizing their hands. They will remain on the altar for the closing prayer and final blessing.

c. After Communion, all ciboria with consecrated hosts are reposed in the tabernacle, and ministers should apply hand sanitizer.

5. Concluding Rites

a. The Presider may offer an optional blessing over the people according to the liturgical occasion; the Mass in Time of Pandemic has its own proper blessing.

b. There will be no concluding hymn.

c. The faithful will remain in the pews for distribution of Holy Communion as outlined below.

d. After distribution of Communion, once all Communion vessels have been sacramentally purified, they (along with other items handled in the Mass) should be washed in hot soapy water after each service.

VI. Distributing Holy Communion at the Conclusion of Mass

A. Meditative recorded instrumental music may be played during distribution of Communion to maintain a prayerful atmosphere.

- B. Each Communion station cart will have a corporal and a dispenser of hand sanitizer on it.
- C. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion will distribute Communion, and will be adequately trained in both liturgical and hygienic protocols.
- D. Each minister takes his or her ciborium to his or her Communion station cart and places it on the corporal, genuflects, applies hand sanitizer, and picks up the ciborium for distribution. The minister's mask will remain in place at all times, and neither ministers nor communicants should wear gloves.
- E. The faithful will be instructed to apply their own hand sanitizer prior to receiving Communion.
- F. Ministers walk through unoccupied pews and distribute to those in the pew behind. Recipients who wish to receive should stand or kneel; those who do not should be seated.
- G. Ministers will start from the back of the church and work their way forward. After the minister departs for the next pew, those who have just received Communion may depart
- H. The minister holds up the host and (through the face mask) says, "The Body of Christ." The communicant, wearing a face mask, replies, "Amen." The communicant extends both hands far in front of the body, hands held flat with palms upward, the left hand on top and the right beneath it (left-handed persons may reverse hands). The minister carefully places the host on the hand. The communicant picks up the host, lifts the bottom of their mask with their free hand, consumes the host, and replaces the mask. The communicant should re-apply sanitizer before interacting with others.
- I. If while distributing Communion a minister touches a communicant, immediately after distributing to that communicant the minister returns the ciborium to the cart and re-sanitizes hands before distributing to the next communicant.
- J. Ministers should start from the back of the church and work their way forward. After the minister departs for the next pew, those who have just received Communion may depart immediately, or pray a few minutes in church in gratitude for the Eucharist, then depart at leisure.
- K. Ministers return all remaining hosts to the tabernacle and secure them.
- L. Ministers will immediately wash their hands thoroughly in soap and hot water.