



Reopening Guidelines and Best Practices

In conferring with the College of Consultors, these Guidelines and Best Practices are given to the priests of the Diocese of Savannah to assist them in developing plans to reopen their churches for prayer and Mass, and to celebrate all the sacraments for the spiritual benefit and physical safety of the people of God in the diocese.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

A. CENTRALITY OF THE EUCHARIST

The Eucharist is “the source and summit of the Christian life (LG, 11)” and so we must make it as available as possible within the constraints forced upon us by the COVID-19 pandemic.

B. SUBSIDIARITY

Decisions should be made at the lowest possible level. Local pastors know the situation in their respective parishes and communities better than the Chancery in Savannah. The following considerations are offered to help pastors make the best decisions for their parishes in the concrete circumstances in which they find themselves.

C. COMMON GOOD

The directives of the legitimate civil and ecclesiastical authorities and the theology of the church need to be taken into account not only for parishes but also for the sake of the broader community. Care needs to be taken to look at all parish activities: council meetings, gatherings, Bible studies, etc.

D. FLEXIBILITY

The exact number of people who will attend Masses will be unknown. Pastors will need to provide flexible plans to accommodate the needs of the people.

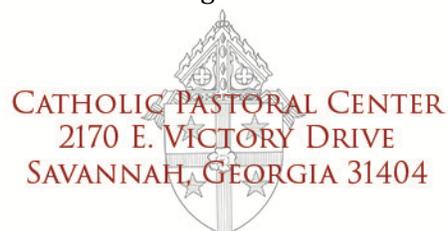
E. ADHERENCE TO GOVERNMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

In the state of Georgia, the Governor has not issued direct orders for churches, but has stated that if and when we gather the regular rule of social distancing should be observed (six feet distancing).

F. SUSPENSION OF THE SUNDAY MASS OBLIGATION

The obligation to attend Sunday Mass remains suspended through Sunday, June 28, 2020. This will be revisited towards the end of June. If parishioners are in the higher risk category due to current illness, age or suffering a chronic health condition or compromised immune system, they are also asked to remain at home. Please be aware of the risk to yourself and others should you choose to come to Mass.

These guidelines will change and be amended as needed.





GUIDELINES

A. GENERAL GUIDELINES

Parishes must post signage reminding people to stay home if they do not feel well or if they are uncomfortable being in such an environment.

1. Suspend all non-essential gatherings – no coffee and donuts.
2. In order to observe social distancing, reduce seating capacity in the church to 25% of the norm; i.e., if your church seats 400 people, there should be no more than 100 people admitted for one Mass. There must be enough space for everyone to maintain proper social distancing. Families can sit together but must maintain proper distance from other families.
3. The church and other spaces (narthex, parish hall, etc.) need to be prepared and cleaned.
4. Doors should be propped open or only one person should touch the door to open/close it.
5. Hand sanitizer and antibacterial/disinfectant wipes should be available to parishioners if possible, or people should be encouraged to bring their own.
6. Bathrooms need to be monitored and kept sanitized.

B. MASS

1. All previous promulgated measures remain in effect:
 - The sign of peace is to be omitted.
 - No distribution of the Precious Blood to the faithful, and only the host will be distributed for Holy Communion.
 - Receiving Holy Communion in the hand is preferable, although receiving Holy Communion on the tongue will not be denied.
2. No holy water in the fonts.
3. No altar servers.
4. No offertory procession: the gifts should be brought over from the credence table.
5. Collection baskets should be placed in the church so people can drop their offering envelopes as they enter or leave. Baskets are not to be passed through the congregation. Do not leave the baskets unattended.
6. Do not hold hands at the Lord's Prayer.
7. No choirs: cantors may be present to sing, but due to the limits of social distancing, choirs should be suspended for the time being.
8. Remove hymnals and missalettes. Use electronic means to provide the readings and hymns and encourage people to bring their own resources. If paper copies of the readings and hymns are provided, ushers need to wear gloves and waste receptacles must be at the exits of the church so that the worship aides can be discarded.
9. Training rooms (cry rooms) and nurseries are to be closed.



C. CONFESSIONS

1. Confessions may resume.
2. Distancing is still to be in effect: encourage social distancing for those standing in line.
3. Outdoor and drive-through confessions are permitted.

D. ANOINTING OF THE SICK

The previous promulgated measures are to remain in place. (See "[Anointing of the Sick Directives](#)" issued March 27, 2020)

E. FUNERALS

Funeral Masses may be celebrated if social distancing regulations can be observed.

F. WEDDINGS

Weddings within and outside of Mass may be celebrated if social distancing regulations can be observed.

G. BAPTISMS

1. Baptisms may be celebrated if social distancing regulations can be observed.
2. For anointing, a cotton ball or swab should be used to apply the oil to the infant so that there is no physical contact between the minister and the child.
3. Whoever will receive the candle should pick the candle up and light it from the Paschal candle. The minister may take the fire from the Paschal candle with a taper and light the candle also.

H. RECEPTION INTO THE CHURCH OF CATECHUMENS AND CANDIDATES

For the catechumens and candidates who did not come into the church at the Easter Vigil, pastors are to find a suitable date and time to baptize and confirm them and receive them into full communion with the church. This can be done at a special Mass or Sunday Mass.

I. CONFIRMATION

In future correspondence, pastors will be given delegation to determine a date and time suitable for their parish for the celebration of the sacrament of confirmation for their youth.

J. COMMUNION TO THE HOMEBOUND OR VISITING THE SICK

The ministries of bringing communion to the homebound and visiting the sick remain generally suspended except in the case of viaticum, or of family members who are trained, commissioned communion ministers bringing the Eucharist to members of their own family. Priests can exercise their personal judgment in particular cases.

K. ADORATION CHAPELS

Adoration chapels, if social distancing cannot take place, are to remain closed.



OPTIONS AND BEST PRACTICES

- Continue live streaming Masses so people who are not yet comfortable can participate.
- Add additional Masses.
- Have a secondary/overflow Mass if needed. Outdoor and parking lot Masses are permitted subject to logistical, meteorological, and physical separation challenges.
- Invite people to daily Masses instead of Sunday Masses.
- At the discretion of the pastor, masks may or may not be required to attend Mass. Whatever the local decision is, people need to be aware of the risk they are taking by participating in public Masses.
- Decrease the amount of singing by the congregation.
- If a parish has an adoration chapel but it needs to remain closed, offer exposition after Mass in the main church and adoration can continue until the church is closed and locked for the evening.

Given in Savannah, Georgia on Tuesday, May 19, 2020.

Fr. Daniel F. Firmin, J.C.L.
Diocesan Administrator
Diocese of Savannah