



**THE ROMAN CATHOLIC
ARCHDIOCESE OF PORT OF SPAIN**
Health, Safety and Environment Team
c/o Archbishop's House, 27 Maraval Road, Port of Spain

Bulletin # 7

**Reopening of Churches during the week of
October 25, 2020**

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1. Introduction

As congregations happily return to places of worship following the COVID -19 update delivered by the Hon. Prime Minister on Saturday 24th October 2020, the Health Safety and Environment (HSE) Committee of the Archdiocese is reiterating the following guidelines. These are intended to mitigate the risks as we continue to face the challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic. Please remember that there is an increased risk of infection as restrictions are lifted, especially when we assemble in groups, so it behoves us all to act judiciously, both individually and collectively. The clergy is expected to lead with compliance of the protocols and to urge the laity to do likewise. We therefore ask everyone to adhere to these guidelines and to share them with friends and family.

2. Things to be done before the Reopening of our Churches

- a) All church buildings should be sanitized prior to the first Mass unless they have been fully sanitized (sprayed by fogging) within the past two weeks.
- b) Calculate the maximum number of persons who can now attend a service at the church based on spacing of six feet between individuals. The maximum for each parish church, parish hall, parish building or any other building in which a Mass or a meeting is being held for church-related activities is: **fifty percent (50%) of the total social distancing capacity of the particular building, based on an allowance of thirty-six square feet per person.**
- c) Ensure that all markings on the floor and in pews are in place to facilitate the required physical distancing. Suitable markings on the pews and chairs should clearly indicate where attendees are allowed to sit.
- d) Ensure that sinks, faucets and running water are in place to accommodate washing of hands or that hand sanitizer is available at the various points of entry.

3. Things to be done before attendees are allowed to enter our Churches

- a) All attendees must wear a face mask, covering nose and mouth. The mask must cover the nose and mouth and must extend from across the nose bridge, around the mouth and under the chin and must be in continuous, direct physical contact with the face on all sides of the mask.

- b) While a face shield may be worn in addition to the mask, please note that the face shield by itself does not provide sufficient protection from limiting the spread of respiratory droplets and the potential transmission of virus particles.
- c) All attendees must thoroughly wash hands with soap and water, which if not available, should be substituted by hand sanitizer of at least 60% alcohol content.
- d) The temperature of each person seeking to enter the church should be tested by using a contactless thermometer. The temperature should not exceed 37.5°C.
- e) Persons with flu-like symptoms should not attend any church ceremonies.
- f) At all services, there must be registration of ALL attendees by way of name and telephone number to assist with Contact Tracing should this become necessary.

4. Activities before and during Mass

- a) Purchase of the Catholic News should be done by inserting at least the exact payment through a slot in an appropriately labelled marked box.
- b) All attendees must wear a face mask for the duration of the Mass and must maintain the six- foot physical distancing.
- c) Members of the same household may sit together.
- d) Members of the choir and lectors **must** observe the guidelines spelt out in (b) above, including when singing or reading. Choirs are encouraged to function with the lowest number of members necessary for a quality delivery. **These requirements also apply to practice sessions.**
- e) Collection should be taken up either by use of baskets with long handles or by having it placed in locked boxes, suitably labelled, at the entrances to the church.
- f) There is to be no Sign of Peace as was customary prior to the pandemic. However, attendees may make a contactless gesture of peace to one another.

5. Distribution of Holy Communion

- a) Those wishing to receive Holy Communion should form a single queue starting from the first pew, ensuring that they maintain the required physical distancing.
- b) The Priest/Lay Minister should distribute Holy Communion at an arms-length distance and the communicants should also extend their hand at an arms-length distance.
- c) The communicant should keep his mask on his face up to the time he receives the Host in his hand and after doing so, he should turn away from the Priest/Lay

Minister, remove his mask and place the host in his mouth before replacing his mask on his face and returning to his seat.

- d) **There is to be no distribution of the Precious Blood at Masses.**
- e) The reception of Communion on the tongue is prohibited.

6. Activities after Mass

- a) Attendees should leave the church pew by pew and should not congregate, neither inside nor outside of the church.

7. General Information

- a) The Government has stipulated that no one religious ceremony should exceed one hour in duration.
- b) Air conditioning units may be used with due caution during church services. However, scientific evidence suggests a well-ventilated space allowing the circulation of natural air through open doors and windows is preferable so as to minimize transmission of COVID-19.
- c) The guidelines, including maximum numbers stated in this Bulletin also apply to Weddings, Funerals and Parish or Archdiocesan groups such as St. Vincent De Paul, National Catholic Men's Ministry, Altar Servers, **subject to the physical distancing limitations stated herein. Refer Section 2(b) above.**
- d) Priests may confer the Sacrament of Reconciliation provided that physical distancing and privacy requirements are respected.

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