



**THE ROMAN CATHOLIC
ARCHDIOCESE OF PORT OF SPAIN**

Health, Safety and Environment Team
c/o Archbishop's House, 27 Maraval Road, Port of Spain

**UPDATED GUIDELINES
FOR OPERATING
DURING THE
COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

BULLETIN #24

Issued 10th March 2022

We here in Trinidad and Tobago are in the 24th month of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic and transitioning into the endemic phase of this respiratory, infectious disease outbreak. This means that most of the population has some immunity i.e. protection from becoming severely ill from SARS-CoV-2 either through vaccination or prior infection. There is a phased return to normal routines and a relaxing of restrictions.

THE PARTS OF THE MASS AND THEIR CORRESPONDING GUIDELINES	
<i>GENERAL PRINCIPLES</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Do stay home if you have flu-like symptoms or feel ill. ● Regularly practise good hand hygiene. ● Do not congregate or gather in crowds. ● Always cover your nose and mouth with a well-fitting face mask. ● Even when the air conditioning is on, we recommend that doors and windows remain open and fans be turned on to facilitate effective ventilation during services.
<i>BEFORE MASS</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● We strongly recommend that every effort be made to facilitate a minimum of 3 feet physical distancing between individuals. However, if others turn up for Mass/Service, they should not be sent away. We should have designated seating for families and members of the same household who need not observe physical distancing. ● It is no longer required that ministers, hospitality members, lectors or choir members be vaccinated against COVID-19 to serve in their chosen ministry. ● Neither pre-registration nor signing-in upon arrival for Holy Mass is required. Careful hand washing or sanitizing of hands with an alcohol-based sanitizer is required upon arrival/before entry into the church. ● Do perform temperature screening at the door. Individuals with a body temperature of 37.5C or higher, should be discreetly denied entry.

<i>DURING MASS</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● All worshippers, ministers, lectors and choir members must keep their face mask on at all times even when presiding from the altar, reading from the lectern, delivering announcements and/or singing. Masks should only be lowered for a moment to consume Holy Communion.
<i>PRESENTATION OF THE GIFTS AND PREPARATION OF THE ALTAR</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Do not allow the passing of baskets during the collection. Baskets affixed to long handles can be used once those collecting can maintain physical distancing. Alternatively, use fixed collection boxes. ● The Offertory Procession is to be omitted.
<i>THE SIGN OF PEACE</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Non-contact gestures, such as a nod of the head, are to be used for the Sign of Peace.
<i>THE DISTRIBUTION OF HOLY COMMUNION</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Priests and Ministers of Holy Communion must wash their hands with soap and water, if possible, or use hand sanitizer before distributing the hosts. ● Distribute Holy Communion to at-risk persons first, if practical to do so. ● Distribute Holy Communion onto the palm only. ● No Holy Communion to be distributed from the chalice. ● Distribute Holy Communion at arm's length to the recipients who must receive it at arm's length, thus achieving close to six (6) feet physical distance between Priest/Minister and Communicant. ● The communicant must step away from the Priest/Minister before briefly lowering his/her mask to consume the Host.
<i>AFTER MASS</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Clean and sanitize common surfaces after every service. ● Wash all Communion vessels in hot, soapy water. ● Clean all liturgical vestments regularly.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sanitize restroom facilities after each liturgy.
<i>BAPTISMS</i> <i>FUNERALS</i> <i>WEDDINGS</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These special services continue with all of the above measures, including the pre-COVID-19 capacity. • Q-Tips should continue to be used for the anointing. • Caskets with the bodies of persons who died from COVID-19 must remain closed from the time of arrival to the departure from the church.
<i>SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This should be accommodated in a private area of the church where there is adequate ventilation

FAQs

Q. How many persons are allowed in the church during Mass or special services?

We are permitted to accommodate the full, pre-pandemic capacity in our places of worship. As an interim measure, we have suggested a reduction of the safe physical distance to a 3-foot separation to accommodate, without prejudice, worshippers who may have health vulnerabilities but choose to partake of in-person worship.

Q. How many persons are permitted in the choir?

Choirs may return to their pre-pandemic number but with a 3-foot physical distance between members.

Q. Can my daughter who is 10yrs old and unvaccinated against COVID-19 serve on the altar?

Yes. Vaccination against COVID-19 is no longer a requirement to serve in any ministry.

Q. When can I receive Holy Eucharist on my tongue?

Persons infected with SARS-CoV-2 shed the virus in their breath up to three days before they are aware of any physical changes in their body. To avoid transmission to the Priest/Minister and other communicants, at this time the Holy Eucharist will only be distributed onto the palm of the hand. This stipulation will be updated in future bulletins.

Q. When will I once again be able to receive the Precious Blood?

The HSE Team will continue to evaluate the risk of transmission of significant infection from a communal cup and advise in future updates.

- END -