

General Regathering Guidelines
Applicable during phases 1-3
Diocese of Des Moines
Updated July 2, 2021

General Instructions:

Parishes should follow the guidelines below, as well as the liturgical guidelines and cleaning and disinfection guidelines that accompany this document.

Pastors should be attentive to those parishioners who are uncomfortable with recent relaxations of mitigation practices. Pastors retain the discretion to continue to offer liturgies with more extensive mitigation practices, such as requiring masks, so that the parish can continue to be a welcoming place for all members of our community.

The Sunday obligation will be reinstated on July 25, and those who are experiencing COVID symptoms, or those who have been exposed to someone COVID positive should not attend Mass.

Required Guidelines:

For a parish to resume public Masses the following conditions must be met:

1. Social distancing is recommended for unvaccinated individuals. Household units should attempt to sit at least six feet apart from other families when possible.
2. The worship space must be thoroughly disinfected at least once a week, and after every positive COVID test.
3. Efforts are made to make the Mass as hygienic as possible, while respecting the integrity of the liturgy. These efforts include, but are not limited to:
 - a. A suspension of a physical exchange of peace.
 - b. A suspension of distribution from the chalice.
 - c. A modified distribution of Holy Communion (see liturgical guidelines)
4. Choirs and hymnals are again permitted.
5. Unvaccinated ushers, greeters, and liturgical ministers are strongly encouraged to wear a mask throughout the liturgy.
6. Masks are optional. Unvaccinated parishioners are encouraged to use a mask or other face covering. Parishes should have extra face coverings on hand outside parish entrances.

Recommended Guidelines:

1. A parish should do everything possible to ensure that those who assist at Mass are not members of a vulnerable population. This would include--but is not limited to--ushers, lectors, and extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion.
2. Parishes should make hand sanitizer readily available for Eucharistic ministers, and may make sanitizer available for the entire congregation as they enter or depart the church.

3. Parishes should clearly articulate all distancing and hygienic provisions to parishioners prior to Mass, on the parish website, through email, or by other means. Provisions should also be posted at the parish. Signs indicating that those who feel ill should not enter should also be posted.

Discouraged Practices:

1. Parishes should not schedule any large liturgies or events (i.e., with more than 10 persons present) without the parishioners' clear knowledge that events are contingent on the COVID-19 situation. This would include First Communions in which extended families wish to attend, baptisms, weddings, funerals or other large liturgical gatherings. The sacraments can proceed to be celebrated, but parishioners should be aware of the possibility of renewed restrictions on the gathering size. During all phases First Communions, baptisms, wedding, and funerals can be celebrated while meeting the above guidelines.