



# DIOCESE OF DALLAS

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## DECREE

### INTRODUCTION

On June 17, 2020, I issued a decree which continued to the third phase of the diocesan reopening plan. As indicated at that time, the opening of the Diocese is to occur in four phases. While this decree does not begin Phase Four, it does replace the initial Phase Three decree issued on June 17, 2020.

These guidelines are subject to change, specifically if there are concerns over increased cases of infection in the Diocese.

### PHASE THREE UPDATED

Therefore, at this time, in consultation with the Presbyterate, following local civil and health authorities' guidelines, and out of a desire to help combat the virus and limit the flock from exposure or risk, aware that many events can by their nature attract large numbers of people, I hereby present this decree.

#### General

- **Disinfection** remains important, and it is left to pastors, who have gained experience with the virus over these many months, to seek a clean environment in their parishes.
- It remains strongly encouraged that those present in a church building **wear a proper face covering**, following local civil orders where appropriate.
- While all are encouraged to seek out a vaccine for COVID-19, **parishes may not require that members of the Faithful present proof of vaccination** for entrance into a church or parish building.
- The **Pastoral Center** continues its opening process. Sacramental services (including the work of the Tribunal) remain functioning at full capacity.
- **Parish Offices** continue to be opened at the discretion of the pastor.

#### Mass

- **All Catholics in the Diocese of Dallas remain dispensed** from the obligation to attend Mass "on Sundays and other holy days of Obligation" (canon 1247) and **remain dispensed** until further notice.
- Those who are presenting symptoms consistent with COVID-19 *should not* attend Mass.

- **It is left to the discretion of pastors to determine the proper gathering and seating requirements** for Mass celebrations. Pastors are to be cognizant of the needs of their parishes and should be mindful of the concerns of the Faithful.

While there is no specific capacity requirement (either minimum or maximum), nor is there any requirement to leave every other row empty during Mass, pastors should establish a space (either a separate Mass time or a separated space in the church) that provides a fully socially-distanced environment for those with concerns about gathering.

- **Mass schedules** are determined by the pastor, taking into consideration the needs of his community. Sunday Masses and other devotions will continue to be livestreamed. In addition to parishes, the Diocese continues to broadcast live Masses and recorded events on the Diocese of Dallas website and local television. During such Masses, there will be an act of spiritual communion.
- Hymnals, worship aids and other papers, such as contribution envelopes or visitor cards, may be distributed during Mass at the discretion of the pastor, but sheet music should remain available for those requesting it.
- Holding hands during the Lord's Prayer is not encouraged, especially between different family units.
- The Sign of Peace remains suspended at this time.
- Cry rooms and nurseries may be utilized.
- The collection basket may be distributed, and gifts may be brought up in procession, but collection baskets may remain available at entrances and exits. Individuals are encouraged to donate online if possible.
- **For any liturgical celebration that includes reception of Holy Communion**, the following requirements must be met:
  - The Faithful who are present at these liturgical celebrations are free to forego reception of Holy Communion and make an act of spiritual communion.
  - All vessels must be sanitized before celebration.
  - Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are permitted to distribute Holy Communion. Pastors should be aware of the needs and concerns of all Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion.
  - Distribution of the Precious Blood remains suspended at this time.
  - Priests should sanitize their hands before approaching the altar prior to the beginning of the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Deacons and installed acolytes should sanitize their hands before distribution.
  - Those distributing Holy Communion should wear face coverings during distribution of Holy Communion.

- Those receiving Holy Communion are encouraged to receive communion on the hand.
- Individuals should remove face coverings and gloves before approaching to receive communion.

### **Other Sacraments and Gatherings**


- **All other sacraments and parish gatherings among the Faithful** may continue at a capacity and in a way determined by the pastor. Pastors are to use their discretion in determining what events are appropriate in light of the circumstances. Pastors must ensure that gatherings do not draw or consist of unnecessarily large groupings.
- **Communion as Viaticum, Anointing of the Sick and Confession** are to be given in danger of death where possible. In the event where COVID-19 is indicated, please contact the emergency number (469-401-7717).

**This decree remains in effect until it is modified or revoked.**

Given on April 21, 2021 in the Diocese of Dallas.



Gregory Caridi  
Chancellor



Most Reverend Edward J. Burns  
Bishop of Dallas