



Office of the Bishop

Stage 3 – New Guidance for Worship Services

26 August 2021

Dear Pastors, Assoc. Pastors, and Parishioners,

Greetings in the Lord!

As of 24 August 2021, the Provincial Government has issued new guidance for “Low Risk Worship Services.” In order to protect one another from COVID-19 and reduce the risk of transmission of the coronavirus, and given that I can implement certain requirements as a Faith leader, the following prevention measures continue or are now in place for clergy, staff, parishioners and visitors of our parishes and parish/diocesan offices:

In general

- You must stay home if you are sick, and get tested
- **Masks are mandatory for all people 12 years and older regardless of vaccination status**
- Wherever possible, maintain social distancing and respect each other’s personal space
- Use hand sanitizer when you enter and exit the church
- Disinfecting and sanitizing protocols of high touch surfaces is recommended
- Use plexiglass barriers if you have them
- Holy Water Fonts to remain empty. Consider having a touchless dispenser at the entrance/exit of the church
- Ensure good fresh air circulation and ventilation
- Everyone eligible is encouraged to be vaccinated as vaccinations are the surest way of protecting oneself and especially others

Mass

- No restrictions on numbers
- Clergy to continue to follow the protocols such as covering the Eucharistic bread used for the parishioners, intinction if one is concelebrating, etc.
- Holy Communion continues under one species, the Body of Christ
- Ministers of Holy Communion are to sanitize their hands before and after giving Holy Communion
- Holy Communion on the Tongue is to be received after everyone has received on the hand. The Priest is to sanitize his fingers between each communicant with hand sanitizer/disinfectant, and after the distribution of Holy Communion, before cleaning any Mass vessels

- Please make Holy Communion available for those unable to attend Mass indoors, provided they have attended a virtual Mass
- Sign of Peace: continue using a gesture other than a handshake with those not of the same household
- Collection: do not pass a basket around but consider having a receptacle available as people come into the church or have the Ushers take up the collection
- Music Ministry: to lower the risk of transmission, ensure a well-ventilated space, and continued use of barriers and physical distancing
- Live-Stream Masses: continued use is recommended for those unable to attend Mass in-person
- Sunday Mass & Holy Days of Obligation: the dispensation remains in effect. Nonetheless, everyone is encouraged to return to in-person celebrations of the Eucharist as soon as possible
- Parish Offices: remain open to the public. Social distancing, hand sanitizing, mask protocols to be maintained

Other organized gatherings:

- Weddings and funerals: up to 50 people; masks are mandatory for those 12 years of age and older with a COVID-19 safety plan
- Outdoors: limited to 100 people with a COVID-19 safety plan
- Discretionary or social or non-essential meetings will be subject to proof of vaccination requirements starting 13 September 2021 (1st dose) with full implementation by 24 October 2021 (2nd dose)
- Non-discretionary meetings such as AA, NA or other support groups are exempt from the proof of vaccination requirements
- Hospitality after Mass: basic food safety practices to be in place. Anyone who is sick or not feeling well not to be involved in food preparation or serving. Hand sanitizing to be done before eating/drinking. High touch surfaces to be cleaned and disinfected regularly. Do not share food or drink and respect each other's space. Will be subject to proof of vaccination after 13 September 2021.

Thank you for your continued patience in light of these changes. God bless you.

Sincerely in Christ our Lord,



✠ Gregory J Bittman
Bishop of Nelson