



Archdiocese of Kingston

Norms for the Celebration of Sacraments

I. Preamble: Priority of the Spiritual Life

As clergy we must take seriously the recommendations of health experts and the government, nevertheless, the role of the Church is the salvation of souls. In times of crisis the Church has always been there to strengthen the faith, hope and love of people, nourish their spiritual lives, and through prayer and worship implore divine assistance to aid the efforts of scientists and researchers to find a cure and restore a normalcy to society.

II. Care for the Priest

Any priest or deacon with lowered immunity should stay at home in isolation. A priest or deacon who feels ill with flu like symptoms could infect others and should remain in isolation. If in doubt, priests and deacons, as well as retired and elderly priests, with compromised immune systems should error on the side of caution in their decision-making.

III. Responsibility

Priests and Deacons are reminded that they exercise their ministries in conjunction with their Bishop. This unity is most important in times of crisis and should be given a high priority and be evident to the people. Any action on their part that is not in keeping with the directives of the Archbishop reflects on their Parish as well as the Diocese and may make themselves, the Parish and Diocese liable for lawsuits.

IV. Celebration of the Sacraments and Rites of the Church

The restrictions implemented by the government concern the number of people who might assemble for liturgical or church celebration and their interaction. Normally, in times of uncertainty, the tendency is for Christian people to gather together for prayer and the celebration of the Mass and Sacraments. Unfortunately, in this situation the gathering of people is what poses the extreme danger.

1. Church Buildings:

- a. Government regulations now insist that churches should be closed to the public. Therefore, Churches, halls, offices, rectories and adoration chapels are to be closed. Priests are not to schedule appointments or receive people in the Rectory.
- b. Hand sanitizers should be in place in the church and clearly visible and located near the entrances and exits for any people entering for any reason stated below.
- c. Washroom facilities must be disinfected on a regular basis for anyone entering them for any reason as stated below.

2. Baptism of Children:

- a. Of all the Sacraments, Baptism is the one necessary for salvation. While recognizing the grace and action of God through baptism of desire, nevertheless, Baptisms should not be postponed for long periods of times.
- b. When celebrated, the entire Rite of Baptism is to be celebrated but restricted to the area around the Baptismal Font.
- c. Baptisms are to be celebrated in the Church and not in homes. Only the parents and godparents should accompany the child to the church, with social distancing and other precautions maintained as fully as possible.

3. Initiation of Adults and Children of Catechetical Age:

- a. The Rites of Initiation of adults and children of catechetical age, including the Scrutinies, are postponed until they can be celebrated in their entirety at a later date.
- b. Scrutinies with children (ages 7 to 14) are best celebrated with a small group outside of Mass. When restrictions on the public celebration of Mass are lifted, the Scrutinies for adults are to be celebrated at the Parish Sunday Eucharist, if possible, or at a weekday Mass.
- c. If, with the agreement of the priest or at the urgent request of adults who have celebrated the Rite of Election, the priest may baptize, confirm and give the Eucharist without the celebration of Mass with the permission of the Ordinary.

4. Confirmations and First Communions:

- a. All Confirmations and First Communions are put on hold until further notice.

5. Eucharist:

- a. The public celebration of the Eucharist with the faithful is suspended until further notice by decree of Archbishop Mulhall in accordance with the Declaration of Emergency by the Government of Ontario.
- b. Any plans by parish priests for public celebrations or distribution of Communion, whether in the church or outdoors, are not permitted.
- c. Videotaping and streaming of Masses may include not more than 4 people to serve as musician, reader and media technician. Those attending must observe social distancing, as well as insuring proper sanitation and disinfecting of microphones, pews, door handles, etc.

6. Confessions:

- a. Gatherings for Penitential Celebrations are to be cancelled.
- b. Confessions are not to be celebrated in the Church. Priests are not to offer times for confessions, unless held outdoors.
- c. Permission for General Absolution is not given. The danger of contagion is greater when a number of people congregate.
- d. Through the social media, bulletins and other means, priests should post information about how to make a perfect act of contrition. An act of contrition should be made available to parishioners.

7. Sacrament of the Sick:

- a. When celebrating the Anointing of the Sick in danger of death, the priest should wear medical/surgical gloves for the laying on of hands and anointing, and if available a mask.
- b. Care must be taken that the container of Holy Oil does not become contaminated. The priest's thumb should be dipped in the oil only once for the anointing both of forehead and hands. Gloves must be discarded after anointing each person.
- c. It is advisable that a number of cotton swabs soaked in the Oil of the Sick be placed in plastic bags, and used only once for each person. The used swabs should then be burnt after one use.

8. Communion to Shut-ins:

- a. Communion to the sick by lay people is suspended. Viaticum is permitted for those in danger of death.

9. Funerals

- a. At present a Liturgy of the Word without Communion may be celebrated in the church with only the family present as subject to the limits proposed by the Ontario Government and the regulations of the Funeral Home.
- b. It is recommended that, if possible, priests postpone Funeral Liturgies until a later date and celebrate a Committal Service at the cemetery only.
- c. Priest should be aware that Funeral Homes might have their own regulations, which should be respected.

10. Marriages

- a. At present a Marriage without Mass or Communion in the church may be celebrated with only the bride and groom and two witnesses.

11. Celebration of Holy Week and the Easter Triduum:

- a. The Vatican has issued guides for the private celebration of the Triduum by parish priests. These will be communicated separately.

+Michael Mulhall
Archbishop of Kingston