

## Guidance for Masses, Parish Ministries and Celebrations of the Sacraments

Provided parishes can meet appropriate social distancing requirements and/or logistical arrangements, indoor services can be conducted including Mass, the Sacrament of Penance, Adoration, and individual prayer.

As stated by Bishop Zarama, all of the faithful continue to be dispensed from their Sunday obligation.

Bishop's dispensation from the Eucharistic Liturgy on Sunday also applies to the feasts of the Immaculate Conception, the Nativity of the Lord, and the Solemnity of Mary, the Mother of God, this liturgical year.

While this dispensation is applicable to all, the elderly, those sick, those with pre-existing health conditions or other vulnerable people should especially continue to stay at home.

Additional precautions are to be taken when distributing Holy Communion, including frequent use of hand sanitizer by Eucharistic Ministers.

No Communion from the chalice and/or shaking hands during the Sign of Peace.

### Special Considerations for Evening Masses

Regarding evening Masses, most notably upcoming Masses for Christmas, please note that the Executive Order 181, issued on December 8, 2020, which restricts public activities after 10 p.m. *exempts worship, religious and spiritual gatherings*.

While parishes may choose to proceed with evening and other Masses, the Executive Order and additional guidance from the diocese (see below) notes that recommendations to promote social distancing and reduce transmission, face coverings, and avoid exceeding emergency maximum occupancy should be adhered.

Recommendations to Promote Social Distancing and Reduce Transmission:

- Maintain at least six (6) feet social distancing from other individuals, with the exception of family or household members.
- **NC Executive Order 180, issued on November 23, 2020, stated that masks/face coverings must be worn whenever an individual is near someone who is not from the same household, including in any public indoor space even when maintaining 6 feet of distance.**
- Carry hand sanitizer with you when leaving home, and use it frequently.
- Wash hands using soap and water for at least twenty (20) seconds as frequently as possible.
- Regularly clean high-touch surfaces such as steering wheels, wallets, and phones.
- Stay at home if sick.

Avoid Exceeding Emergency Maximum Occupancy:

The most recent guidance does not prohibit gatherings for worship services but still recommends against holding large Gatherings (defined as more than 10 people). Should parishes offer indoor Masses, they should adhere to Emergency Maximum Occupancy recommendations which is the lowest number produced by applying the following three tests:

- Limit the number of visitors in the space to fifty percent (50%) of stated fire capacity
- Or, for spaces without a stated fire capacity, no more than twelve (12) persons for every one thousand (1000) square feet of the location's total square footage, including the parts of the location that are not accessible to visitors.
- Limit the number of people in the space so that groups can stay six (6) feet apart.