



## Sacramental Guidelines for Reopening

# CELEBRATION OF MATRIMONY

These guidelines for the celebration of matrimony in a church reflect the updated guidance by government officials, healthcare professionals and church authorities.

These guidelines are based on current requirements for groups of 10 or less in the church at any time, excluding ministers.

Parishes should adapt only as necessary, however, **being careful not to violate social distancing, face covering and sanitizing practices.**

Parishes or pastors may **not** alter the number of persons allowed, social distancing, face covering, or sanitizing guidelines contained here.

### Preparation

1. A small table (preferably with a glass top for easy cleaning) should be placed in the sanctuary in such a place that is easily accessible to the priest during the liturgy. Holy water, a plate with the rings and a plate with the arras, if used, should be placed on the table before the liturgy begins.
2. A particular section of church seating is to be designated that will allow for people to maintain appropriate social distance (see more below). Family units who are domiciled together may sit together OR the parish may designate certain pews as “family pews.”
3. If there is a photographer, he/she is to strictly maintain proper social distance from all other participants throughout the liturgy. The photographer must be masked at all times.
4. Entry and exit doors are to be adequately designated and monitored. Entry doors are to be propped or held open before Mass, and exit doors are to be propped or held open at the end of Mass to prevent people from touching the door handles, knobs or push plates.
5. The floor of the church should have tape marks observing proper social distance, designating where the faithful are to stand during any procession (e.g., Communion).
6. In addition, all pews/seating are to be clearly marked or designated such that there is a six-foot perimeter in all directions for every individual seat. One pew or row of seating is to be left vacant between pews or rows used for seating congregants such that six feet of distance can be maintained in all directions. Seating should also be offset or staggered by row such that no two people sit directly in line with each other in adjacent seating areas. Family units who are domiciled together may sit together OR the parish may designate certain pews as “family pews.”
7. A “greeter,” or some agent of the parish should, meet the participants outside the church or in the vestibule, hand out masks if they have not brought their own, and require the use of hand sanitizer. They should remind worshippers that anyone who is ill or having symptoms of illness should not enter the church.
8. Worship aids are not allowed.

9. The greeter is to assist people in maintaining proper social distance and other guidelines as necessary.
10. Masks should be worn for the entire time the faithful and guests are in the church. Per IDPH and CDC guidelines, those with breathing difficulties can be exempted from this requirement, but those individuals must observe the strictest of social distancing from anyone not living in their domicile.
11. Determine procedures for people using the restrooms. It is suggested that only one person use the restrooms at a time.

## **Celebration of the Liturgy**

1. The presider should make use of a lectern or stand for the missal or may even place the missal on the altar for the presidential prayers. NOTE: If a server is used, it should be an adult.
2. Participants, including ministers, are to sit in the designated/marked seats, keeping appropriate social distance. To emphasize: all should be wearing masks. Priest/deacon may remove his mask when he is speaking.
3. All participants should be in their places before the liturgy begins. The priest should also be in place at the front of the sanctuary.
4. For the opening procession, markers on the floor of the aisle should be used to maintain social distance. The couple, or the bride and her parent(s), processes to the front and meets the priest (and the groom, if not processing with the bride). The two witnesses are in their places in the front pews and remain there for the entire liturgy. (There is no need for witnesses to move forward during the service.)
5. For the Liturgy of the Word, the reader may lower his/her mask for the proclamation of the reading. This applies, as well, to the person announcing the petitions in the Universal Prayer/Prayer of the Faithful.
6. For the Order of Matrimony, markers on the floor, maintaining appropriate social distance from the priest, should indicate where the bride and groom are to stand. (The priest would stand six feet away either in front of the bride and groom, as may be customary, or off to the side.)
7. For the blessing of the rings, the priest goes to the table prepared beforehand, blesses the rings and then extends the plate holding the rings to the bride and groom without making physical contact. If used, the blessing and giving of the arras are done in the same manner.
8. The procession with the gifts is omitted. The gifts are to be on the credence or side table and the priest (or deacon if there is one) can bring them to the altar.
9. The blessing and placing of the lazzo or veil is not to be included.
10. For the nuptial blessing, the priest is to maintain appropriate social distance from the couple.
11. If there is a deacon, a separate chalice shall be consecrated for him.
12. Holy Communion is to be distributed only under the form of the consecrated host, and only in the hand, with the priest sanitizing his hands immediately before and immediately after distributing Communion.
13. For the distribution of Holy Communion, a single-file line is necessary to maintain social distancing.
14. During the Communion procession, communicants are to be instructed to use the markers on the floor of the aisle to maintain social distance. The help of an usher or greeter, directing pew by pew as may be customary, will be very helpful.

15. At the front of the aisle, there is to be a table with hand sanitizer. Each communicant is to use it to sanitize his/her hands before receiving Communion.
16. Before he begins distributing communion, and before he dons his face shield or mask and goggles, the priest should announce to worshippers that the following is the procedure for reception of Communion:
  - a. Move forward in single file maintaining six feet between each person, looking for markers on the floor.
  - b. Sanitize hands from table or from sanitizer offered by usher.
  - c. Do NOT touch your face, clothing or any other surface after sanitizing your hands.
  - d. As you approach the priest after you have sanitized your hands, receive the Host in your hand ONLY.
  - e. Step six feet to the side, remove strap from one ear of your mask or face covering, letting it hang from the other ear, and uncovering your mouth, consume the Host.
  - f. Replace the mask over your mouth and nose and return to your seat.
17. The priest moves to a side table, sanitizes his hands and dons his face shield or mask and goggles. Explain your use of the face shield/mask and goggles as a protection for the congregation and yourself.
18. For the procession out of church, the participants should be dismissed row by row, allowing for appropriate social distance on the way out.

### **Post Celebration and Cleaning**

1. Pews and other high traffic areas of the church are to be cleaned using sanitizing wipes, with the removal of trash and other items from the pews.
2. Those performing the cleaning must wear gloves and a face mask.
3. All side tables and vessels/instruments used in the service must be sanitized/wiped clean and left to dry before reuse. (Please note rinsing with water alone is NOT sufficient to kill a virus.)
4. In the unlikely event that a worshipper or minister coughs or sneezes in proximity to the celebrant, the vestments used for this service must be sent for cleaning and NOT reused until cleaned.
5. After the celebration, the ritual books should be sanitized/wiped.
6. If photographs are to be taken after the service inside the church, it is recommended that all but the bride and groom wear masks. Minimally, if the priest/deacon is to be photographed with the wedding party he must keep his mask on. A recommendation to take the pictures outside the church where more space is available should be made to the wedding party before the service.