

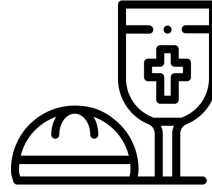
ROAD MAP TO

Re-Opening Our Catholic Churches Safely

By Ad Hoc Committee of Catholic Doctors
May 2020



Guiding Assumptions



- ◆ Sacramental life is essential for Catholics, and churches can operate as safely as other essential services.
- ◆ Catholics must be guided at all times by faith and reason, especially in times of crisis.
- ◆ Safest practices should be created with input from medical experts. These practices will likely evolve as the pandemic unfolds, and will vary based on ongoing local, regional, and national risk assessments.

Working with Public Officials

Celebration of Mass should comply with state and local regulations and orders, but regulations and orders should not unduly impinge on Catholics' rights to attend Mass and celebrate the other sacraments.



Points for Parishes to Consider

1

Parishes should implement plans for celebrating Mass which incorporate safest practices in the time of COVID-19. These plans must include scheduled environmental cleaning of pews after each celebration of Mass, and parishes should consider supplying masks, hand sanitizer, etc., at the church entrance in case people do not bring their own.

2

Parishes should display simple and clear signs outlining safest practices.

3

Parishes should develop an integrated approach to respond to confirmed incidents of COVID-19 within the parish, including plans for communicating with parishioners, diocesan officials, and public health authorities.



Identifying Symptoms



1

One should not attend Mass if he or she is experiencing any symptoms of illness, especially:

- **A temperature above 100.4 F**
- **Cough or sore throat**
- **Shortness of breath**
- **Recent loss of smell or taste**
- **Chills**
- **New muscle aches**
- **Gastrointestinal upset and diarrhea**

2

Those feeling unwell should not attend Mass.

3

Those who feel they may have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 should not attend Mass.

Safest Practices for Attending Mass



1

Worshippers should attend church wearing masks.

2

Safe social distancing should be maintained while in church — at least 6 feet between immediate families or individuals.

3

Preferably, younger priests and/or young eucharistic ministers in good health should distribute communion.

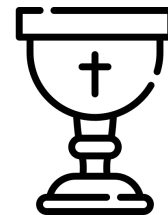
4

Communion lines should maintain safe social distancing.

5

Choirs and singing should be avoided, as they are likely a high aerosol generating activity that could spread COVID-19 or other viruses.

Safest Practices for Receiving Communion



Because newly available evidence* shows that viral burden is highest in oral secretions, communion is most safely received as follows:

- 1 Communion should be received in the hand.
- 2 Both the priest/minister and the communicant should be wearing masks.
- 3 Both the communicant and the priest/minister should sanitize hands prior to distributing and receiving communion.

- 4 If any physical contact occurs between the communicant and the priest/minister, the minister should immediately sanitize his hands with alcohol-based sanitizer, then let his hands dry for 1 minute to avoid membrane irritation and secretions before resuming distribution of communion.

* www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2020.04.16.20067835v1.full.pdf

Considerations for Confessions



1

Confession should follow safe social distancing practices and be carried out in a well-ventilated area, outdoors, or in the main church.

2

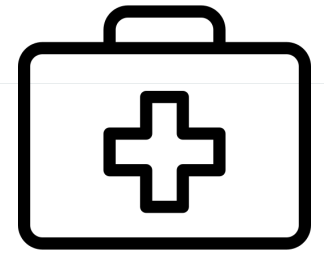
In confession, both the priest and the penitent should wear masks and an impermeable physical barrier should be placed between priest and penitent.

3

The penitent area, including any surface touched by the penitent, should be sanitized by the penitent at the end of their confession, using Lysol or Clorox wipes provided by the parish.

Members of the Ad Hoc Committee of Catholic Doctors

This document presents the consensus view of the medical authorities listed below, specifics of implementation are to be determined by bishops and pastors. Institutional affiliation is provided for identification purposes only and does not constitute institutional endorsement.



Timothy R. Aksamit, M.D.

Pulmonary Disease
and Critical Care Medicine
Mayo Clinic

Andrea Baccarelli, M.D., Ph.D.

Epidemiologist and Chair,
Environmental Health Sciences
Columbia University
Mailman School of Public Health

John Lane, M.D.

Radiologist
Mayo Clinic

Allen J. Aksamit, M.D.

Neurology and Neurovirology
Mayo Clinic

Paul Krogstad, M.D.

Pediatric Infectious Diseases
UCLA Medical Center

Anushree Shirali, M.D.

Nephrologist
Yale University School of Medicine

Andrew Wang, M.D., Ph.D.

Rheumatologist and Immunobiologist
Yale University School of Medicine