



Current as of May 21, 2020, 5 p.m.

CHURCH REOPENING FAQs – PHASE 1/1A

Sacraments and Rites

Is it permitted for lectors and musicians to remove masks to perform their duties during Mass?

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. This same direction is extended to the cantor: when the cantor is singing, the mask may be lowered. It must be worn at all other times while in the church.

Could you have both a cantor and an accompanist?

There may be more than one music minister (for example, an accompanist), but all social distancing requirements must be kept: musicians must remain six feet apart from one another at all times and wear masks. Vocalists and wind instruments must remain 10–12 feet away from any other minister or member of the assembly. Note that these directives are for Phase 1/1A with assemblies of 10 or fewer people, so music should be in scale to the assembly. Choirs, quartets, etc. are not allowed at this time.

Will parishioners also not be singing?

At this time, congregational singing is allowed; however, face coverings or masks must be worn by the congregation when singing.

Can Mass, Communion services, First Communions, adult Baptisms or Receptions into the Church (RCIA), quinceañeras or other rites be celebrated?

Phase I is only for those rites listed in the guidelines: Baptisms, Reconciliation, funerals, and weddings. The document “Receiving the Eucharist” was meant to provide guidelines if Mass were part of the wedding or funeral. Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and the church being open for private prayer is for Phase 1A, once Parish Reopening Leadership Teams are comfortable with the other celebrations of Phase 1. All other Sacraments, rites and rituals are part of Phase 2.

Are altar servers or extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion allowed? What about face shields for extraordinary ministers?

As of now, in Phase I, only 10 parishioners, exclusive of ministers, are allowed at the celebration. With that low number, an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion should not be needed. The priest can distribute Holy Communion to that few of people on his own. If an altar server is needed, it should be an adult.

How can a priest or deacon administer Communion, baptize an infant, etc., while maintaining six feet of social distance?

He can't, which is why the face shield is so important at these moments. The shield becomes the barrier that allows the liturgical / sacramental action to be administered as safely as possible. The face mask / covering alone would not provide as much protection as the face shield at these moments.

General

How should we understand the number 10?

The number 10 refers to the TOTAL number of individuals who are worshipers and participants allowed in the church at any one time for the sacraments and rites during Phase 1/1A. This includes ALL participants such as bride and groom; child being baptized, etc. It does NOT mean 10 families or 10 groups.

For Eucharistic Adoration and private devotion during Phase 1A, it is understood that as some worshipers leave, others may enter the church provided that the total number of worshipers in the church at any one time does not exceed 10.

In all instances, this 10 does NOT include ministers for the service such as priest or deacon, music minister, usher/greeter, funeral director, etc. These individuals are IN ADDITION to the 10 worshipers or participants.

Certification Process

Where can I find the certification form, and are digital signatures allowed? To whom do we submit the completed certification form?

The [certification form](#) can be found on the Reopening Training website; it allows for digital signatures so the Parish Reopening Leadership Team does not need to meet in person to sign the document. Once completed, please submit the form to Maggie O'Brien at mobrien@archchicago.org.

When is the certification form expected to be submitted?

The certification form should only be submitted when your parish is ready. Parishes can and should work at their own speed.

How do we receive “credit” for attending the training webinars as part of the certification process? Will we receive confirmation that we attended the webinar training?

While we can track archdiocesan emails of people who attended the webinar training, confirmations will not be issued for webinar attendance. When the pastor and his co-leadership team sign the certification form, they are attesting to the fact that the whole team attended the training webinar.

Can a parish wait until Phase 2 is implemented?

No. In order to advance to Phase 2, parishes need to hold at least three (3) services during the Phase 1/1A period. These opportunities of hosting small services for 10 people or fewer related to weddings, funerals, baptisms, private prayer or Eucharistic Adoration during Phase 1/1A allow parishes to practice and test what works and to refine their COVID-19 preparations for the larger and/or more complex celebrations, like Mass, which will follow under Phase 2.

Is there information available on the Sacramental Preparation Webinar?

These are optional Q&A webinar sessions focused solely on questions about sacraments and liturgy in Phase 1/1A of the Reopening Plan. Father Ken Simpson, Todd Williamson and Justin Lombardo will moderate the Q&A.

These sessions are for clergy only. Each session will be one hour and we will answer live questions. Feel free to join any session; however, if participation is spread out we will have a better chance of addressing the majority of questions that are submitted. Therefore, we ask that you attend the one designated for your vicariate, if possible.

- Vicariates I and II: Thursday, May 21 at 11 a.m. [Reopening Q&A Webinar for Clergy](#)
- Vicariates III and IV: Thursday, May 21 at 3 p.m. [Reopening Q&A Webinar for Clergy](#)
- Vicariates V and VI: Friday, May 22 at 9 a.m. [Reopening Q&A Webinar for Clergy](#)

In preparation, please read all of the documents on sacraments and liturgies that are on the [Reopening Training webpage](#).

Building Space and Disinfecting

What products are recommended for disinfecting? Bleach can be damaging to surfaces within the church.

The EPA provides a list of effective disinfecting products and that list is linked to from the CDC website related to cleaning and disinfecting against the COVID-19 virus (which is provided in our Disinfecting Spaces Guide on the webpage). Products need to reference the fact that they are effective against viruses. There are many surface-safe products that clean and disinfect, and we encourage parishes to use those products when available. Most will have ammonium chloride as their primary disinfecting ingredient. We view the use of a diluted bleach solution as a less desirable alternative, but one that many parishes will need to use because of its availability.

When marking out the church for the appropriate social distancing, do we need to account for the space of parishioners themselves and leave extra distance?

No, six feet of distance between markings is sufficient considering parishioners will also be required to wear masks during any services/ceremonies.

Are families required to sit six feet apart? If not, how do we account for that when planning out our space?

Family members residing in the same home can be seated together. There is no practical way to mark the pews or other gathering spaces to account for the fact that family members may be seated next to one another. As such, it is important to understand ahead of time the impact seating a family together has on the availability of surrounding seating (side-to-side and front-to-back), and ensure that ushers fully understand how to individually adjust seating to accommodate families. For instance, once an usher seats a family, it is likely that surrounding seats will have to be left unoccupied during that ceremony/service.

Our windows don't open. Can we use air conditioning?

Generally speaking, the COVID-19 virus is not currently classified as an airborne virus. It is spread through close proximate contact. Therefore, the likelihood of spread through air conditioning systems is remote. However, introducing as much fresh air into our spaces helps to eliminate stale recirculated air. Opening windows and doors are the most effective means of doing this; however, fully opening fresh air dampers on central air conditioning intake systems is another effective way to bring fresh air into the space and will be necessary during the summer months.

How do I manage bathrooms, and can I temporarily close them for use?

Bathrooms should remain open for parishioner use during this time and disinfected after every ceremony. Soap and paper towels should be readily available for parishioners to wash their hands along with signage reminding parishioners to do so. Appropriate waiting areas should be marked with proper social distancing. Signage indicating whether a bathroom is occupied/vacant would be beneficial.