



DIOCESE OF ST. CATHARINES

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COVID-19 VACCINATIONS

On 21 December 2020, in a note regarding COVID-19 vaccines the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, while recognizing that vaccination is not ordinarily a matter of moral obligation, reminded Catholics that “the morality of vaccination depends not only on the duty to protect one’s own health, but also on the duty to pursue the common good.” All Catholics (clergy and laity) are encouraged to consider being fully vaccinated, not only for their own sake but for the sake of others.

All Catholics should take precautions to ensure that they do not put others at risk from COVID-19. Those feeling ill or showing signs of COVID-19 infections should follow the latest advice from their physician or local health authority on how to proceed.

AMENDMENTS TO DIOCESAN PROTOCOLS BASED ON RECENT DIRECTIVES FROM THE “WORSHIPS SAFE” DOCUMENT (ACBO) APPLICABLE TO ALL CHURCHES AND PARISH FACILITIES:

- Cleaning procedures for pews, washrooms, confessionals, reconciliation rooms are relaxed so as to require only regular cleaning in accordance with pre-COVID-19 routines, with the only exception being when someone with suspected or known COVID-19 has attended, in which case the space should be disinfected.
- Churches should be well ventilated when possible. This will vary according to the space but it should be treated with importance. Ventilation may involve opening windows and utilizing fans to exhaust air from the sanctuary. Avoid placing fans in areas where they may impede access or cause contaminated air to flow from one person to another.
- Bulletins, envelopes, pamphlets and newspapers may again be distributed as per pre-COVID-19 practices.
- Votive light stands may be re-opened, subject to notices requiring appropriate distancing of two metres (six feet).
- Crying Rooms and small Chapels may be used again as long as proper distancing is maintained.
- Confessions should be heard outside of the confessional to allow for proper distancing, cleaning and contact tracing (if it becomes necessary). Where confessionals are used, both priest and confessor are required to wear masks. Priests should employ double masking or the use of the N95 mask so as to further lower the risk of contamination.

Collections may again be taken up using baskets in the traditional fashion. All ushers involved in taking up collection must wear masks while undertaking this task and use a collection basket with a long handle to maintain the two metres (six feet) distancing.

ALL OTHER PROTOCOLS REMAIN IN EFFECT, INCLUDING:

- Communion procedures are unchanged. The person distributing communion and the communicant must be fully masked.
- Physical distancing of two metres (six feet) remains the requirement for attendance in church and parish facilities, including seating; however, groups of people from the same household may be seated together.
- Mask wearing remains required.
- Contact tracing remains required. It is mandatory that each parish maintain a list of all attending parishioners including their contact information. Such lists shall be placed with parish financial records and maintained for a period of not less than six years.
- Bishop Bergie's dispensation from the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and on Holy Days of Obligation, granted on March 16, 2020, is ongoing. A listing of diocesan parishes with livestreaming can be found at www.saintcd.com.