

**Diocese of Fresno
Reopening Guidelines
Frequently Asked Questions**

The following questions have been asked about the guidelines for Masses during the pandemic. Please read through them to have the latest, updated information.

Note that as of June 18, 2020, all directives remain as stated, especially regarding wearing of masks inside the Church and the capacity at celebrations.

Q: Are we being required to keep lists of those who attend any of the services – weekend or daily Mass, funerals, weddings, etc.?

A: **It is not mandated unless your county health department requires otherwise.**

Q: Can face masks be removed during Mass?

A: **A face mask is required to be worn while entering the church and throughout the Mass by everyone except the presider. Masks can be lifted to consume Holy Eucharist and returned to place promptly before returning to sit with the assembly.**

Q: Whose decision is it to require face masks of adults and children over the age of 12 but not of children under 12? Is the decision left to the discretion of each individual church or does the mandate come from the diocese?

A: **This is the decision of the Diocesan Task Force, based on the information provided by the CDC, the U.S. Bishops, the State of California and county health departments. After much discussion, this is the decision made and approved by our Bishop and will remain in effect until further notice.**

Q: Does each parishioner temperature need to be taken to enter Mass? Do we need to take each employee's and/or volunteer's temperature before they volunteer or start work?

A: **Parishioners are encouraged to self-monitor; no parish is required to have a thermometer check of each parishioner attending Mass. Employees and volunteers are also encouraged to self-monitor, but each church should have a touch-free thermometer available to check an employee that is exhibiting possible symptoms (see page 7 of guidelines- Individual Controls and Supplies).**

Q: The number of people who are testing positive for COVID-19 is increasing. Should I open the Church? How long would it be wise to wait?

A: **As long as parishes can open for Masses safely, they should open as soon as they are ready with supplies and a safe plan, approved by the Risk Management Manager.**

Q: What is the capacity for indoor and outdoor Mass?

A: The capacity for Masses is currently either 25% of building capacity (not counting crying rooms or other rooms separate from the main seating) or 100, whichever is fewer. For outdoor Masses, provide for six-foot distancing, and attendance should not exceed 100.

Q: Can I put an "Out of Order" sign on the bathroom doors?

A: Bathrooms must be available for those attending services. The number in bathrooms can be restricted for sanitizing and distancing purposes. The capacity should be the number of people who can be at the sinks while six-feet apart.

Q: What accommodations can be made for families with small children, who might need to leave during Mass?

A: If space and logistics allow, ushers could seat families with small children at the end of a row, so if they need to exit with small children they might do so without compromising the social distance of other parishioners. Ushers should be pastoral with families with small children and help them as much as possible.

Q: Is singing at outdoor Masses permitted? Can I have singing in the choir room- 1 or 2 cantors or family unit?

A: Until restrictions are lifted, there is to be no singing at Mass.

Q: During distribution of Holy Communion if Clergy touches the hand of the parishioner, is he required to wash his hands?

A: The priest must sanitize his hands immediately before continuing to distribute the Holy Communion.

Q: I take care of my parents; can I attend Mass?

A: Caregivers should not attend Mass, as they will put both themselves and the person for whom they are caring in danger.

Q: Can I anoint the sick if someone is going in for surgery and has already been tested?

A: A member of the clergy can anoint someone who is in very serious condition if he can do so using all safety precautions and there is no danger of infection. If the clergy member is over 65 or has a health condition that puts him in danger, he should not expose himself to illness.

Q: The money counting team is are usually volunteers over the age of 65. Can staff count the money during the pandemic?

A: Since it would put volunteers over age 65 at risk, it is acceptable to have staff members and other volunteers count the collection at this time. Maintain detailed counting forms and follow procedures as outlined by the Parish Finance Reporting Office.

Q: The Safe Environment program is run by volunteers; we bring them into the offices?

A: **Volunteers who are essential may be present in the offices as long as strict safety guidelines are adhered to at all times. This includes wearing masks at all times and keeping the six-foot distance from one another. They should only be in the office for the time absolutely necessary.**

Q: Does the parish priest have full authority to say who volunteers or not?

A: **Yes, volunteering at our church is a privilege- not a right. The parish priest has full authority to determine who volunteers and in what capacity. All safety, safe environment, our catholic religious beliefs and each parish's need will be considered, but the parish priest has the final say.**

Q: Can a priest increase the amount of people in their Adoration Chapel if the building allows?

A: **Yes, it can be increased as long as there is an adequate space for social distancing and the space is monitored and disinfected according to the guidelines for Masses.**

Q: How many Masses can be celebrated per weekend?

A: **Each priest can celebrate the number of Masses that meet the needs of the people, given the spiritual and physical limitations of the priest. In scheduling Masses, there must be an adequate time for cleaning and sanitizing before the next service.**

Q: Are Groups /Ministries allowed to have meetings at the church or hall?

A: **Groups/Ministries are only allowed to have virtual online meetings at this time.**

Q: Are food sales and other fundraisers allowed?

A: **All food sales and fundraisers are suspended until further notice.**

Q: My church is selling face masks- is that allowed?

A: **At this time, parishioners should be bringing their own mask. If someone needs a mask, the parish can have some on hand to distribute. No face masks are to be sold.**

Q: We are having a wedding reception in our church hall in August 2020 that meets all the safety and distancing guidelines can we have a 3-piece live band that sings?

A: **Currently on parish grounds, only Masses and sacramental celebrations are allowed. No receptions, or gatherings of any kind aside from this, should be taking place.**