

# Reopening the Church

Hi Friends

Good morning everyone. Hope you are keeping good health and in high spirits.

Bishop Wayne Kirkpatrick has shared with us the long awaited good news that the provincial government has permitted us to reopen churches for our worship. Accordingly, the Bishop has decided to open our churches for weekend Masses beginning July 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>. We thank God for this good news that we can assemble again to offer our worship to God as a faith community and celebrate the Eucharist.

The Bishop has sent out a 13 page long instructions and guidelines to be followed whenever we come to the church. I am sure you will find these 13 page long guidelines too cumbersome to read and remember, so I have abridged the Bishop's letter for your easy consumption highlighting the most necessary/important points to be kept in mind whenever you go to church. Those of you who like to read the entire text of the Bishop's Letter, please visit our parish website. The Bishop reminds us that "while these guidelines may feel strange or uncomfortable, following reasonable restrictions during this pandemic to contain the virus is a matter of faith, charity and justice."

## **Part I: General Norms**

### **Implementing the Plan**

Each parish shall designate a minimum of two persons to implement the guidelines and directives outlined in this document.

### **Social Distancing**

Please ensure that you do not have any symptoms of the virus, e. g., cough, fever, headache, etc., before you come to church. While in the church, maintain a two meter (6 ft.) physical distance. **However, families from the same household may be seated together.**

Skip Rows to ensure the two meter distance.

### **Personal protective Equipment**

Inside the church, the use of masks and gloves are recommended, but not mandatory.

### **Capacity Control**

The maximum number permitted by the provincial government is 50. The parishes of Frenchvale, Boisdale and Wagmatcook will have no problem with the number as in these parishes our community is small (So, please do not stay back home).

However, St Barra and St Michael have got to do a little planning to do. We will work that out and will inform you well in advance.

**A Card:** The Bishop asks the parishioners to bring a card with their name and phone number so that we have a record of those who attend a particular Mass. Each parish will keep a list of those who attend for a period of 30 days.

### **Cleaning of Churches**

All pew fronts and tops and sides of benches are to be wiped with a sanitizing agent before and after the Mass. However, since we come to church only once in a week, it is not necessary to clean the church after the Mass as the virus is believed to live no longer than 72 hours.

## **Disinfectant Hand Sanitizer**

There should be at least two locations for entrance and exit where a volunteer each will assist with dispensing sanitizer.

## **Holy Water Fonts**

Holy water fonts are to remain empty until they may be used safely.

## **Hymnals, Prayer Books, Envelopes**

There should be no hymnals, prayer books, or any printed materials on the pews or in the vestibule. Bulletins will be posted only electronically.

## **Sacristy**

Entrance to sacristy is limited to those who are required to prepare for the liturgy.

## **Washrooms**

As far as possible, please avoid using church washrooms.

## **Part II: Celebration of the Eucharist**

### **The Assembly**

All in the assembly, except the priest, are recommended to wear a mask. No fans will be used to avoid the spread of any droplets.

### **Ministers of Hospitality**

Ministers of hospitality are to be present before Mass at the entrances to the church to direct people to the hand sanitizers and to their seats while observing physical distancing.

**The Priest and the Deacon** shall sanitize their hands before and after the Mass and before and after distributing Holy Communion

### **Music**

In order to avoid the projection of particles from the mouth, the parishioners are asked not to sing during this time of the pandemic.

A cantor accompanied by a single instrumentalist may sing at Mass as long as they maintain a distance of 3 meters from each other.

### **No Entrance procession**

The entrance procession will take place from the sacristy to the altar where the priest just bows to the altar instead of kissing it.

**No Altar Servers** during the time of the Pandemic

### **Liturgy of the Word**

Only one lector/reader will proclaim both the First and the Second Readings. While the responsorial Psalm is sung/recited by the cantor after the First Reading, the lector may be seated in the assembly and should be close to the lectern/ambo.

**No candles** are used for the Gospel Reading.

## **Offertory**

No offertory procession, and the bread and wine will be placed on the credence table. The priest will take care of everything.

## **The Monetary Collection**

The monetary collection is to be received at the doors of the church **at the end of the Mass** where people can place their donations in baskets supervised by ushers from a safe distance. You could choose also other ways of making donations like Direct deposit or handing over the check to a member of the Finance Committee at a time of your convenience during the week, etc. But we NEED money; we are running at a deficit.

## **The Deacon**

The deacon maintains a safe distance throughout the Mass and he does not elevate the chalice.

## **Greeting of Peace**

The greeting of peace shall not take place during the pandemic.

## **Holy Communion**

While coming up to receive Holy Communion, maintain two meter distance from the person standing in front of you. The minister carefully places the Body of Christ in the communicant's hand without touching the person. **NO** communion on the tongue during the pandemic.

The precious Blood will not be served; the deacon does not receive from the chalice.

**After the Mass, the sacristan make sure** that the paten, ciboria, and chalice are washed in soapy water.

## **Communion to the Sick**

Communion to the sick and the homebound **will not** take place for the time being.

**After the Mass**, parishioners are instructed to leave the church without spending social time with the priest and fellow parishioners at the door.

## **Celebration of other Sacraments/Rites**

Celebration of Baptism, Marriage, and Funerals will take place as usual **PROVIDED** we follow all the preceding guidelines of social distancing and the maximum number 50.

## **First Communion**

At present, First Communion and Confirmation will not take place until further notice.

Thank you. God bless you. I am eagerly waiting to see you.

Fr. Vargheese IMS (vargheseims@gmail.com)