



Office of the Bishop

Diocese of Antigonish
168 Hawthorne Street, P.O. Box 1330
Antigonish, NS B2G 2L7
Chancery 902-863-3335 / Fax 902-863-0037
Residence 902-863-1557
E-mail: bishopkirkpatrick@dioceseofantigonish.ca

July 3, 2020 Feast of St Thomas the Apostle

Dear Clergy, (Pastoral Letter 22/2020)

With the June 26 COVID -19 Update, Premier McNeil and Dr. Robert Strang, Chief Medical Officer of Health, changed their position from suggestion to recommendation that all residents of Nova Scotia should wear masks when physical distancing cannot be guaranteed. It would be wise to recommend that all parishioners who want to attend a public indoor celebration of Mass wear a mask. As noted in our *Protocol for the Safe Re-Opening our Churches*, that “in order to mitigate the potential spread of the virus, all those over the age of two are encouraged to wear a mask/face covering when physical distancing is not possible. While not mandatory, they are highly recommended for the congregation.”

It was also noted in the *Protocol*, Holy Communion is distributed by the priest, deacon and extraordinary minister of Communion and that all ministers of Holy Communion are to sanitize their hands before and after distributing the Eucharist. The dialogue between the minister of Holy Communion and communicant occurs at 2 meters or 6 ft. physical distance. After the dialogue, the communicant approaches the minister who carefully places the Body of Christ in the communicant’s hand without touching the person. **For the safety of the faithful and our clergy, as well as following the strong recommendation of medical authorities, Holy Communion is to be received only in the hand at this time. Since each communicant has the right to receive communion either on the tongue or in the hand, the traditional practice of the option of receiving on the tongue will be restored as soon as the public health situation allows for that. It is noted that some may not agree with this position but I ask you to be mindful, this is indeed a pro-life issue and concerns the well-being of all people.**

Communicants are recommended to wear a mask as they line up for Holy Communion, 2 meters (6 ft.) apart from others. They are to leave their mask on when they reply “Amen” (physically distanced) and during the period when the Host is placed in their hand. They step to one side, and at that point remove the mask in order to consume the Holy Eucharist, affixing the mask after consumption and returning to their place. It is desirable that the priest remind the people that they are to place one open hand upon the other to reverently receive the Sacred Host.

I hope that this follow-up helps to clarify our pastoral directive.

Bishop Wayne Kirkpatrick
Bishop of Antigonish