

OFFICE OF WORSHIP

MEMORANDUM

Date: July 24, 2020
To: All Clergy and Business Administrators of the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis
From: Reverend Tom Margevičius, Director, Office of Worship
Re: **Facial Masks; Summary of Communion Distribution Protocols**

I. Facial Masks

On July 22, 2020 Governor Walz issued Executive Order 20-81 requiring face coverings in all indoor spaces, including churches (with some exceptions) taking effect July 25. Though decisions regarding safety protocols within Catholic churches are ultimately within the authority of the diocesan bishop, Catholic tradition teaches that the Church should collaborate with public officials in the service of public health and the common good unless directives are unreasonable, impractical, or discriminatory. The Archdiocese does not regard the Governor's Executive Order to wear face coverings to be any of these. Parishes have already instituted strict distancing and cleanliness protocols, and this requirement may be an additional burden. Nonetheless, the Archbishop appreciates encouraging mask use, promoting community health, and not giving scandal to others by not wearing masks.

One important note: liturgical ministers such as priest-celebrants, cantors, and lectors are exempt from Gov. Walz's Order and are not required to wear face coverings when lectoring, singing, or celebrating Mass. Face masks should not be used by children under the age of two, instrumentalists playing brass or woodwind instruments, and persons with certain respiratory conditions for whom wearing a mask poses a greater health risk than not wearing one. The mask is also removed for the reverent reception of Holy Communion. Obviously, a priest, cantor, or lector may nevertheless choose to wear a face covering when ministering.

If difficulties emerge because of face coverings, tell us so we can work with public officials on reasonable amendments, accommodations, or clarifications. If parishioners have complaints about the Order, direct them to Gov. Tim Walz at (651) 201-3400 or <https://min.gov/Governor/contact/>

II. Summary of Communion Distribution Protocols (For more details refer to the May 26, 2020 Memo from the Office of Worship.)

A. All distributors of Holy Communion (clergy and extraordinary ministers) are to wear facial masks and sanitize hands before and after distributing Communion.

- B. Ministers should have hand sanitizer always nearby and use it after every physical contact with a communicant.
- C. Communion in the hand is strongly recommended because greater social distance is believed to lessen the effect of recipients' breath upon the minister. Pastors may make reasonable adaptations in parishes needing additional accommodations, respecting those concerned about contracting COVID-19. (Some of the faithful are uncomfortable receiving Communion when communicants in line ahead of them receive in the mouth.) Parishes may designate certain lines or times for those not receiving in the hand. Others sanitize hands after distributing to each communicant who receives by mouth.
- D. Priests and deacons are encouraged to remove the chasuble or dalmatic after the final blessing at Mass and before distributing Communion.
- E. It is preferred that Communion be distributed after Mass if the number of anticipated communicants exceeds 20.
- F. Communicants are to wear masks and sanitize hands before approaching Communion.
- G. The communicant, wearing the mask, holds hands extended far in front. When the minister says, "The Body of Christ," the communicant replies "Amen," optimally while still wearing the mask, keeping hands flat and motionless. Once the communicant receives the Host, she or he steps to the side, removes the mask with one hand, consumes Communion with the other hand, then replaces the mask and practices hand sanitization.
- H. Communion is always to be distributed personally, minister to communicant. It is not permitted to give Holy Communion in paper cups, plates, tissues, plastic or wax paper sleeves or baggies, or allow the faithful to pick up their own Host from a tray, table, or the altar. If you have questions direct them to me, Fr. Tom Margevičius.
- I. **Preferred Method: Communion Lines**
 - 1. After the final blessing, those desiring to receive Holy Communion form a Communion line and proceed to the designated place of distribution. Others may depart the church as per the parish's COVID plan.
 - 2. Those in the communion line or exiting the church must keep their masks on and maintain six feet of distance between persons not in the same household.
- J. **Alternative: Communion in the Pews**
 - 1. Ministers may bring Communion to the faithful in their pews.
 - 2. After the final blessing, those receiving remain in the pews; others depart.
 - 3. Ministers, carrying the ciborium and hand sanitizer in a small bottle or equivalent alcohol hand wipes, walk through each pew in front of where communicants are located (they may need to remove the ropes or pew barriers).
 - 4. Ministers give Communion to recipients in the pew behind in the same manner as described in II.G. above.

5. Experience suggests that this method works best if ministers start in the back of the church and work their way forward.
 6. Once a minister finishes distributing to each pew, communicants leave their pews and depart the church.
- K. After Communion, remaining hosts are consolidated on the altar and reposed in the tabernacle.
- L. Only priests, deacons, or instituted acolytes may purify the vessels after Communion. Following this, the sacristan should wash them in hot soapy water.
- M. Persons with Celiac's disease or otherwise unable to consume even a low-gluten host (100% gluten-free hosts are never permitted) may receive Communion from the chalice. A separate chalice must be set aside for each communicant, who is offered the Blood of Christ by a minister in the usual way. Only that communicant may receive from that chalice (a priest, deacon, or instituted acolyte will still need to purify the chalice).

If you have any liturgical questions or suggestions continue to send them to me at: margeviciust@archspm.org.