



CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE OF TIKOLHO E KATHOLIKE EA ISIFUNDABHISHOBHI SASE JOHANNESBURG

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Dear Monsignor & Rev. Father

SUBJECT: DIRECTIVES FOR THE EASING OF THE COVID-19 NATIONAL LOCKDOWN FOR PARISHES WITHIN THE CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE OF JOHANNESBURG

On the 26th May 2020, the State President Mr. Cyril Ramaphosa, announced that, places of worship may re-open, on 1st June 2020, subject to strict restrictions" with a limit of fifty (50) people or less depending on the space available.

The return to Church and public worship will require careful management by the parish priest and parish leadership. Strict adherence to laws regarding COVID-19 at all times and protocols as prescribed by government are to be observed. The guidance provided in this document aims to clarify how spiritual care and how the sacraments of the Catholic Church can be responsibly provided in the midst of the present outbreak post the National Lockdown while observing the guidelines of government health authorities.

It must be made clear that attending the celebration of Holy Mass in a church is a decision each person must make without risking themselves and others. Those regarded as high risk, such as the elderly, should be encouraged to be most cautious and are advised to stay at home rather than attend a public celebration.

Kindly note, that the date for the easing of the restrictions does not mean that the church doors will be opened immediately. The Parish Priest, together with the leadership (PPC & PFC) of the parish must meet to prepare for the re-opening of the church. This will ensure that the restrictions of wearing a mask throughout Mass, sitting at allocated designated seats and maintaining social distancing from each other takes place in each parish.

All our churches and buildings must be 'safe places'. The parish priest must take responsibility on behalf of his parish to ensure that the following recommendations are met. The Catholic Archdiocese of Johannesburg will take seriously any breach of these precautions as we wish to demonstrate the seriousness and importance of ensuring that every parish in our Archdiocese is COVID-19 compliant.

BEFORE THE RE-OPENING OF THE PARISH CHURCH THE FOLLOWING NEEDS TO HAPPEN:

- Deep cleaning with detergents of the inside of the church building
- Ensuring hand sanitizers are installed/placed at all entrances of the church building as well as in the Sacristy and Sanctuary
- Thermometers needs to be placed at entrance points of the church building

- Floors and pews must be wiped down with cloths soaked in disinfectant
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces
- Toilets to be kept hygienic

As your parish prepares to gather for Mass again, here are some questions to consider:

- How will you adjust to changing limitations on the size of gatherings as allowed by the government?
- Are you planning to add services to allow for smaller crowds? Please be very careful before deciding to do this, it is important that all precautions are followed at every Mass and it may be very difficult to do this if there are many Masses.
- How will you train Ministers of Hospitality and others for the new requirements below?
- How will you handle parishioners who disregard public health guidelines or requirements, like not wearing a mask or observing social distancing?

HOLY MASS may be celebrated with effect from 7th June 2020, THE SOLEMNITY OF THE MOST HOLY TRINITY, in the Archdiocese of Johannesburg, after the required precautions are in place.

The following directives shown below, for ease of reference:

MASS ON SUNDAY

No more than THREE (3) Masses may be celebrated, keeping in mind that the church and objects inside have to be sanitized before and after each celebration and pews to be wiped. Time must be allowed for cleaning between services.

Reduce the Mass time duration to a maximum of ONE (1) hour and allow for at least ONE (1) hour before the next service.

HOLY COMMUNION

The reception of Holy Communion in ONE kind should be continue as was the case before the lockdown, with no kneeling at the altar rail, but instead standing with social distance provision. The Celebrant would administer the Sacrament at a safe distance, and only place it on the hand of the recipient and NOT the tongue. The recipient receives from the Priest/Minister, move away from the priest/minister, remove their mask and consume and replace their mask.

The priest should not wear gloves for the distribution of Holy Communion, hand sanitizer is effective against the virus.

There is NO reception of the Precious Blood for the faithful, except for the Priest, if there are concelebrants and a deacon in attendance, intinction can be applied.

WEEKDAY MASSES

Two (2), weekday Masses per day, can be arranged on selected days or can be celebrated on a daily basis to accommodate the numbers, that would be Monday to Saturday.

DISPENSATION FROM THE OBLIGATION TO ATTEND HOLY MASS

The dispensation from the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays or Holy Days of Obligation is given and remains in effect for those who feel uncomfortable or unable to return to public worship right away due to fears or concerns about COVID-19, those who are pregnant, or otherwise in a higher-risk category, those who are over 65 years of age and those who feel sick. Due to the restrictions on the numbers of people who may gather, if you are unable to attend the celebration of Mass on Sunday, you may fulfil your Sunday Obligation by attending Mass on any other day of the week.

BAPTISMS, MARRIAGES, and FIRST HOLY COMMUNION can be performed, following current public health norms regarding social distancing and hygiene practices.

SACRISTANS

Sacristans need to be particularly careful in their preparation of sacred vessels and the elements to be used in Mass and both hygiene and sanitizing must be strictly observed

COMORBIDITIES / HIGH RISK FROM COVID - 19

Individuals with comorbidities and people who are at high risk from COVID-19, and those who are not feeling well need to be discouraged from attending any services and be strongly advised to remain at home.

SACRAMENT OF PENANCE

The Sacrament of Penance should be administered in an open, ventilated location and both priest and penitent must wear masks and keep social distancing while ensuring a sense of privacy.

SACRAMENT OF ANOINTING OF THE SICK

In order for an anointing to be valid, the priest must be physically present to the sick in person. The priest himself must both pronounce the entirety of the sacramental formula and anoint the recipient's forehead with the oil of the sick.

- A sick person should not be brought to the church, church offices or priest's house for anointing
- Before beginning the Rite of Anointing, the priest should perform hand hygiene
- The priest should avoid contact with surfaces as much as possible
- The priest should not take anything into the room with him except what is needed for the celebration of the sacrament and a paper bag for the removal of the cotton swab after anointing
- If the sick person is suspected or known to have COVID-19, the priest should wear a surgical mask and appropriate PPE (personal protective equipment) including gown and gloves

The priest may even stay outside the room for the celebration and only approach the sick person at the time of anointing

- The Rite should be celebrated as normal but the priest should omit the laying on of hands

FUNERALS

Funerals are allowed with the restrictions of fifty (50) people in the church and cemeteries as per the directives of the government. Permits must be obtained from the local police station prior to the service.

FLOOR MARKINGS

The floors of the church must be marked to show where people need to stand during the reception of Holy Communion.

RECORD KEEPING

A register of attendees needs to be maintained for contact tracing. Holy Mass times and attendance registers are to be maintained with the names and contact details attendees. A register of all those in attendance should be kept and archived for possible contact tracing.

CATECHISM, FORMATION AND MEETINGS

Catechism, RCIA, and other faith formation programs at the parish, remain suspended until further notice. All meetings of PPC, PFC or other leadership committees should take place by means of Zoom or any other social media platforms.

Every practice and precaution should be made to protect the priest, deacons, religious and lay faithful. Please be very careful in everything you do. Furthermore, if you and your parish leadership feel that you are unable to comply with these directives, please feel free not to open the doors of your church for public worship. There is no obligation on any parish community to do so at this time. The protection of life is our primary concern as we advance to more difficult and trying times.

Thank you for your understanding and your kind cooperation in this regard.

Let our prayers remain intense for an end to this pandemic and for those infected with the virus. O Lord grant the deceased rest and eternal peace. May Our Blessed Mother Mary, continue to pray for our safety and health, as I keep you in my prayer.

+ Buti Thagale
OMI

Most Rev. Archbishop Buti Thagale OMI
Catholic Archdiocese of Johannesburg



c.c Auxiliary Bishop Duncan Tsoke

Fr. Paul Beukes OMI, Vicar General