

1. Most recent letter from Bishop Kirkpatrick

(Pastoral Letter 21/2020)

June 26, 2020

In providing a COVID -19 update today, Premier McNeil and Dr. Robert Strang, Chief Medical Officer of Health announced that effective July 3, the allowable numbers for gatherings at faith services will be **increased from 50 people to 50% of the church's seating capacity up to a maximum of 200 people, with physical distancing**. They have also changed their position from a suggestion to a recommendation that all residents of Nova Scotia should wear masks when physical distancing cannot be guaranteed.

This news comes as we prepare to re-open our churches for the July 4/5 weekend. As Bishop, I support this directive that allows for more people to attend our churches. Our main concern is to continue to allow for 2 meters or 6 feet physical distancing at all times while also following our diocesan protocols that require cleaning and disinfecting.

As a Diocese, we must continue to work together and assume the responsibility for re-opening our churches for the public celebration of Mass and the sacraments. We continue to ask for your full co-operation and patience as we do our very best to welcome back the faithful. Pastors are free to determine whether they will be able to offer all weekday Masses, given the need to find volunteers who can clean and disinfect the church.

Those who may not be able to attend church for health reasons or due to capacity restrictions are dispensed from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass. I encourage parishes to continue to livestream, video or provide radio coverage of Masses.

Bishop Wayne Kirkpatrick
Diocese of Antigonish

2. As noted above Bishop Kirkpatrick has given permission for churches in the Diocese of Antigonish to open on the July 4/5 weekend, the Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A. However, in order to do so each parish must meet the required guidelines that were published on this website last week. Accordingly, meetings have been scheduled with Parish Councils to clarify procedures:

June 24 – St. John the Baptist, River Bourgeois (2:00pm)

June 26 – Sacred Heart, Johnstown (10:00am)

June 29 – Holy Guardian Angels – L'Ardoise (10:00am)

June 29 – St. Peter's, St. Peter's/Chapel Island, Potlotek – (6:30pm)

Preparations are based on the most up-to-date information and we know that some alterations may be necessary with experience. It is important that all feel safe. As the Bishop noted weekday Masses may be celebrated later once we can ensure safety.

Each parish is asked to prepare a checklist that is made in consideration of their church building and which incorporates the official guidelines. For example, here is the checklist that was produced after the Parish Council meeting by Louise Campbell, Sacred Heart Church, Johnstown, and which will be sent by e-mail to all parishioners:

Sacred Heart Parish
Johnstown
Rules for attending Mass

1. Entering the Church

- a. Only the side door will be open for entering the Church
- b. You should have a piece of paper with your name, phone number and email; this will be dropped in a basket as you enter. This information is to be kept for 30 days in the event that we need to do contact tracing. This is to be done at every mass you attend. If you forgot to bring the paper, one will be provided as you enter.
- c. Use the hand sanitizer that is provided, or bring your own, but use as soon as you enter the church
- d. Follow the marks, on the floor, to your seat, please keep 2m (6ft) apart for physical distancing
- e. You are to remain in your seat until communion

2. Communion

- a. The first rows to go to communion will start from the front of the church to the back, starting on the window aisle
- b. Remain in your seat until the usher has indicated that your row can start going to communion

- c. Keep 2m (6ft) apart while walking to communion
 - d. Only one line will form down the middle aisle
 - e. Once it is your turn to receive communion, stretch out your hands towards the Priest to receive Communion
 - f. If using a mask, remove the mask using the straps and without touching the front of the mask, while the person ahead of you is receiving Holy Communion
 - g. Walk back to your seat following the 2m (6ft) distance
3. Leaving the Church
- a. Both the side and back door will be open to leave the church
 - b. The people who wish to leave by the back door, will follow the following procedure
 - i. The last rows of seats in the church will leave first, once they have left then the next row will leave, the usher will be there to guide you on distancing.
 - ii. Please remain 2m (6ft) apart
 - iii. Use the hand sanitizer on the way out
 - iv. Leave the church without spending social time with the priest and fellow parishioners at the door
 - c. The people who wish to leave by the side door, will follow the following procedure
 - i. The front rows will leave first, once they have left then the next row can leave, the usher will be there to guide you on distancing
 - ii. Please remain 2m (6ft) apart
 - iii. Use the hand sanitizer on the way out
4. Collections:
- a. There will be no collection during mass, please deposit your envelope or donation at the basket provide, on your way out of the church. A basket will be provided at both doors
5. Changes in the Church
- a. Seating is limited and rows are marked off as (not to be used) to comply with physical distancing
 - b. No processions will take place
 - c. There will no Eucharist Ministers or servers

- d. The holy water fonts have been removed
- e. All hymnals, prayer books and other papers are removed from the pews. All other printed material is to be removed from the vestibule. Bulletins will be posted electronically
- f. The church is to remain locked after the weekend mass and will not be open again until the following week. This to minimize cleaning, as the virus cannot live past 72 hours.
- g. Use of Personal Protective Equipment is not mandatory but is highly recommended
- h. Vestry (Sacristy) – Only people who are required to prepare for the liturgy are permitted to enter the vestry
- i. There will be no Greeting of Peace
- j. The washroom is only to be used in an emergency
- k. Family units can sit together

Ushers:

1. Must wear masks and disposable gloves
2. Entering Church
 - a. Ask each person coming into the church to deposit their name and phone number into the basket provided, if they did not bring their information provide them with a paper and pen
 - b. Have each person use the sanitizer provided or if they have their own to use before going to their seat
 - c. Direct the people to follow the designated marks on the floor for following physical distancing
3. Communion
 - a. Start at the front of the church, on the window aisle, and indicate to each row when they are permitted to leave for communion
 - b. Only let the next row leave their seats once physical distancing can be done
4. Leaving the Church
 - a. If leaving from the back of the church, indicate row by row when the parishioners can leave, start with the last pew

- b. If leaving from the front of the church, indicate row by row when the parishioners can leave, start with the front pew
- c. Remind people to keep the 2m (6ft) physical distancing

Signs that need to be posted:

1. Directional signs for entering and exiting the church
2. Rules for physical distancing
3. Health rules (if sick) stay home.

Because some will have questions at this time regarding the safe return to church and to the celebration of Holy Mass the Bishop's Office has offered the following Q & A to help guide us. It is not perfect but we will learn along the way. I thank you in advance for your patience and understanding. The health and safety of all is our first concern.

Our celebration will be simplified and instructions will be offered when appropriate. I hope that our worship experience be one that is life-giving, as we break open the Word of God and are fed by the Body of Christ.

Please remember, the dispensation from Sunday Mass continues as well as (Live Stream or Video) to bring the celebration of the Mass into our homes.

Questions & Answers

If I am still not comfortable attending Mass, am I still dispensed from my Sunday obligation?

Yes. Bishop Kirkpatrick has indicated that those who may not be able to attend Sunday Mass for health reasons or due to capacity restrictions are dispensed from their obligation to attend. COVID-19 is still in a threat to public health, and our churches are open to up to 50 people only. Those who are considered vulnerable and those who care for them should not attend.

Is it alright for me to attend Mass at Church?

Those who are vulnerable should stay at home. This includes anyone who is:

- an older adult
- at risk due to underlying medical conditions (e.g. heart disease, hypertension, diabetes, chronic respiratory diseases, cancer)
- at risk due to a compromised immune system from a medical condition or treatment (e.g. chemotherapy)

More information can be found at <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/diseases-conditions/vulnerable-populations-covid-19.html> and include what the Public health recommends: The best way to stop the spread of COVID-19 (coronavirus) is by staying home and avoiding close contact with others outside of your household.

I want to attend Mass at Church. What should I do before I/we go to Church?

The reality is that COVID-19 is still a threat to public health. Doing your part to ensure the safety of all will help prevent the spread of this virus. This is why our parish is only open to allow for up to 50 people.

Those who are considered vulnerable and those who care for them should not attend. Some may not be allowed entry for a specific Mass if capacity is reached before their arrival.

If you have any symptoms that might be COVID-19 related, or if you have been in contact with someone suffering from possible or confirmed COVID-19 symptoms, please remain at home and contact Public Health authorities at <https://811.novascotia.ca/>

Click here to take a self-assessment. COVID19INFO@novascotia.ca

Do I need to wear a face mask?

It is *encouraged* that everyone attending wear a face mask.

Will face masks be provided at the church?

No. Please bring your own face mask.

Will I be turned away if I do not have on face mask?

No. Face masks are simply recommended and encouraged.

Will Father be wearing a face mask and gloves?

No, he will not. He will be doing his self-assessment to ensure the safety for all.

Will hand sanitizer be available?

You will find hand sanitizer at the entrance and again upon entering the main body of the church. Please make use of it upon entry into the church. Some may wish to bring their own for use at other times.

How will you be cleaning the Church?

Pews and all touchpoints will be wiped carefully, after / between masses with Germosolve or sort of approved disinfecting solution.

Where should I enter the church?

Only the one door will be used for entry and exit. This will allow us to count the number of attendees to ensure that we comply with the capacity to ensure the safety of all with proper distancing. Our other door(s) may be used entrance/exit is for emergency purposes only. Doors will be propped open to minimize touchpoints.

Directional tape will guide you.

Will the elevator be available?

Yes, with a limit of one person / one household. The elevator buttons will be cleaned after each use.

How many people will be able to attend Mass at our Parish?

Up to 50 people on a first come, first welcomed / served basis.

Or

Up to 50 people provided, you call the parish office to reserve a place for you and family members

Where can I sit?

When entering the body of the church you will see clearly marked where you can and cannot sit. Signs are posted “Pew not in use.” You will notice seating is every three pews, 6 feet (2 meters) apart in the pew.

Can my family sit together?

Yes, members of an immediate family can sit together, respecting the proper distance with others in the same pew.

Will be I able to sit in my regular seat?

We request that you only sit where you find the tape markings.

Will we have hymnals?

All hymn books, missals, and other materials have been removed from the church.

Can I sing at Mass?

Government policy is that there be no congregational singing at this time, even with your face mask on. Our director of music or cantor may lead us in song and /or priest.

Will we have our wonderful choir at Mass?

At present, our choir will not be formally in place.

Will there be bulletins?

There will be no printed bulletins at this time. Please visit our website to view our E-bulletin.

What will be the Mass times?

We will resume our public Mass schedule as follows:

Saturday ___ p.m.

Sunday ___ a.m. & ___ a.m.

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday _____ a.m.

This will be re-evaluated as required to meet the needs of those wishing to attend Mass, for example the addition or removal of a Mass.

Will Mass continue to be livestreamed and videoed?

Yes! This is an important part of being a caring Roman Catholic Community. We will continue to livestream, video and provide radio coverage of the Sunday Mass.

Will the Sacrament of Reconciliation be offered?

Beginning on Saturday, July ____, from ____ to _____. The temporary location will be in the _____ room.

Will the quiet room be available?

At this time, the quiet room will be closed. Our apologies for any inconvenience.

Will there be an entrance / exit procession?

At this time, only the priest / deacon will process in and out at the Mass from the sacristy.

Will there be a procession with the gifts at the time of the offertory?

No. All of the gifts of the water and wine, and the ciborium filled with the hosts will already be in the sanctuary.

How will I receive Holy Communion?

When coming down the aisle please keep 6 feet / 2 meters apart. Tape on the floor will guide you in keeping proper distance apart.

Communicants are instructed to remove their masks (if wearing one) while the person ahead of you is receiving Holy Communion.

Masks should be removed by the ear loops with sanitized hands and not touching the outer mask for Communion. Lowering the mask could contaminate your hands then replacing it to the face can contaminate your face.

After the priest or deacon says, “The Body of Christ” and the communicant responds “Amen” (at a distance of two meters), the communicant then approaches the priest to receive communion.

Can I receive Holy Communion on the tongue?

While it is the right of the communicant to receive communion on the tongue, at this time communion may only be received by hand. Thank you for our understanding.

Will there be Extraordinary Ministers of Communion?

At this time, only the priest / deacon will distribute Holy Communion.

Will there be Altar Servers?

At this time, there will not be altar servers in order to ensure proper distancing. (Father will miss the assistance of our altar servers but looks forward to welcoming them back to this ministry in the future)

Will there be a reader / lector at the Mass?

Yes. We will have one reader at each Mass?

Will the washroom be available?

Church washrooms are to be restricted to use only when necessary. No more than one person/family (living at the same address) at a time should use the restroom. Notices to this effect will be posted outside the restroom. Handwashing signs will also to be placed in the restroom.

Will there be Holy Water to bless oneself?

All Holy Water has been removed at the present time.

Will we be able to exchange the sign of peace?

While hand shaking is not permitted, if it we are invited by our deacon to exchange a sign of peace it will be a simple bow of the head to our neighbor.

Will the Liturgy of the Word for Children be offered at Mass?

This ministry is suspended at this time. Our apologies.

Will the collection be taken at Mass?

The collection will not be taken at the traditional time. When you are exiting the main body of the Church, you will be able to make your traditional offering. Ushers will stand by and provide security.

Can I still make my offering via Pre-authorized contribution (PAC) on a monthly basis, via E-transfer, or CanadaHelps.org?

YES! We encourage you to continue with these methods of contributing to our parish. It is easy and the way of the future.

How will we exit at the end of Mass?

At the end of Mass, please exit quietly, maintaining physical distancing. Use the blue tape on the carpet as a guide. Please do not congregate at the doors of the church or in the parking lot.

Are baptisms able to take place?

Yes. Baptisms will resume in the usual manner at ____ p.m. on Sundays. Only one child / family at a time while maintaining physical distancing.

Can a funeral for my loved one take place at the church?

Yes. At this time, Funeral Masses (with the body or cremated remains present) may be celebrated in the church with up to 50 people present.

When will the First Communion for our children take place?

We share the excitement of our young children! At the present time, we will still be holding off until we can celebrate this sacrament safely.

Will parish meetings and functions be resuming?

At the present time, all meetings and functions, including our Coffee Sunday are on hold.

Is the parish office open?

At this time, the parish office remains open / closed.

We are still in the midst of a pandemic, and our primary concern must be for the life and health of the whole community.

We must continue to pray for the people in our community and our world, as we begin to move forward and heal from the devastation of this pandemic.

2. President Trump's new executive order on international religious freedom very well could aid the pro-life cause at the UN where certain bad actors have been trying to strike down conscience protection for medical personnel who object to the killing of unborn babies. Stefano Gennarini, J.D. has the [story](#).

On the other hand, new members of the UN Security Council are likely to push hard for incorporating a right to abortion in humanitarian law. The great Rebecca Oas, Ph.D. [reports](#).

Help C-Fam through the slow summer months. Consider this. You would not have read these two stories anywhere but here. That's because we follow the UN like hawks! Help us right now at www.c-fam.org/donate. Please do it NOW!!

Spread the word. Be daring. Keep the faith.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Asti Rose". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped initial 'A'.

3. New Diocesan Website

Our new website is now up and running!

We continue to add and update the content, but invite you to visit anytime, at the same address: antigonishdiocese.com