

ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF ALBANY

Notes about Drive-in Masses or Drive-up Holy Communion

(as of 5/23/20)

As indicated in the memo of 5/20/20 from the Chancery, a decision for the reintroduction of Masses celebrated in public, will be given shortly.

Where it is possible to celebrate Mass outside (for example in a parking lot, church grounds, or on the church steps) local authorities and law enforcement agencies MUST be consulted well before arrangements are made for the Mass. (for example: there may be local restrictions or by laws that need to be taken into account.)

Some helpful guidelines can be found in the document recommended by the USCCB and produced by the Thomistic Institute (cf. <https://thomisticinstitute.org/covid-sacraments> , document on the phased restoration of public Masses, page 11).

As always, social distancing must be maintained whenever possible.

Wherever possible, those present at the Mass should be able to participate without the use of cell phones etc. (although the Mass may still be live-streamed or recorded for those at home who unable to attend the Mass)

Additionally, an adequate PA system needs to be in place in order for the congregants to hear the celebration of the Mass.

A dais or platform should be set up for the altar, so that congregants may see the celebration of the Mass.

A table with an open corporal and a hand sanitizer should be in place at the point where Holy Communion is to be given.

As the Mass is being celebrated outside, care should be taken that the vessels to be used to hold the elements for Holy Communion can be covered.

As with procedures for celebrating Mass in a church (see the document issued on 5/21/20 by the Chancery entitled, *"Guidelines for the Gradual Reintroduction of Public Liturgies and Worship, Initial Stage"*, part 2 on Eucharist), arrangements need to be in place in case of an overflow of numbers that exceeds the capacity of the parking lot

Ushers or stewards will need extra training so that they can perform their duties. These duties would include:

- Supervising and directing the arrival of vehicles, parking and an orderly exit at the conclusion of the Mass

- Supervising and directing people when they leave and then return to their cars as they come forward to receive Holy Communion

In cases where the faithful are in their cars (either for a drive-in Mass or drive-up distribution of Holy Communion), the communicants should get out of their cars to receive, one car at a time. This could be done akin to what is recommended for the option of distributing Holy Communion after Mass (see the document issued on 5/21/20 by the Chancery entitled, "*Guidelines for the Gradual Reintroduction of Public Liturgies and Worship, Initial Stage*", part 2 on Eucharist).

This is preferable from a public health perspective, because it permits the priest (wearing a mask but not gloves) to stand next to a hand sanitizing station (a table with corporal and hand sanitizer, as described above) and thus gives him the ability to sanitize his hands after each Holy Communion, if necessary. If the priest walks from car to car or from window to window, this hand hygiene would be difficult. It is also preferable from a sacramental perspective, because it removes the temptation to pass the Eucharist from person to person in the car, if a passenger is not near an open window, and eliminates the problem of self-communication.

In addition, distribution of the Eucharist in another vessel or container (a plastic bag, paper cup, or a metal pyx) is not warranted from a public health perspective and may even increase risk: CDC guidance suggests that the virus is not easily transmitted by food, whereas passing other containers from person to person involves more contact with surfaces. From a sacramental perspective, there are additional reasons to discourage this practice, dealing with reverence for the sacrament, the problem of self-communication, the danger of profanation, and the problem of purifying or disposing of containers.

In principle, there should be no public health objection to having people exit their cars, one car at a time (perhaps guided by an usher to direct traffic). This would not constitute a large gathering.