



SUGGESTIONS FOR RELAXATION OF GUIDELINES CONCERNING CATHOLIC MASSES

In light of the relaxation of health guidelines for places of worship in effect as of July 12, we may now review our practices and start returning to normality.

The new measures are presented in detail at: https://cdn-contenu.quebec.ca/cdn-contenu/sante/documents/Problemes_de_sante/covid-19/Plan_deconfinement/21-210-112W_tableau_paliers_vert.pdf

These suggestions are precisely that; they are suggestions. It is up to each community to discern which practices to follow in order to guarantee the safety of all, taking into account the level of awareness in each community and the layout of their respective premises, and also bearing in mind that the virus is still present around us.

It is safe to assume, however, that the great majority of those attending places of worship will already have received at least one - if not two - doses of the vaccine, and that fact permits us to resume with confidence liturgical practices that protect public health and at the same time require minimal safety measures and precautions.

UPON ARRIVAL

The priest may greet people as they arrive at church. He must nonetheless wear a mask and avoid all physical contact with the faithful, while maintaining a distance of at least 1m from them at all times. Where possible, and depending on the weather, it is preferable to greet the people outside in front of the church.

BASIC GUIDELINES

It is essential to keep practising hand hygiene and wearing masks. Masks must be worn inside the church at all times, except when the individual is seated in his or her place and not singing. As for keeping surfaces clean, it is essential to follow the recommendations of the Institut national de santé publique du Québec (INSPQ), which can be found at: <https://www.inspq.qc.ca/publications/3054-nettoyage-desinfection-surfaces-covid19>), i.e.:

- *Surfaces most frequently touched, for example, door-handles, chair-arms, tables, light switches, electronic equipment controls, water taps, elevator buttons, stair railings, toilets, etc., are more likely to be contaminated with SARS-CoV-2. Particular attention should therefore be paid to cleaning and disinfecting these surfaces frequently and thoroughly, as needed.*

This means that the church is not required to undergo a major cleaning after each service.

ENTRANCE PROCESSION

Confinement has thus far required that the priest should approach the sanctuary directly from the sacristy. The entrance procession may now be reinstated. This can consist, as usual, of the celebrant, altar servers and lectors, as well as servers carrying the processional Cross and the Gospel Book. It is essential that each person wear a mask and maintain a distance of 2m from each other.

LECTORS

Since transmission of the virus through inanimate objects is between negligible and non-existent, more than one lector may be called upon to read. These persons may participate in the entrance procession and should thereafter be seated at least 1m apart. Ideally, they should disinfect their hands before proceeding to the ambo.

PROCLAMATION OF THE GOSPEL AND HOMILY

For the above-mentioned reason, the minister who proclaims the Gospel may do so from the ambo. The homily may be delivered from the ambo as well. The minister and the preacher should both disinfect their hands before proceeding to the ambo.

OFFERTORY PROCESSION

The offertory procession may be reinstated in order to present the gifts of the congregation. It must be ensured that a dispenser of hand sanitizer is on the small table where the sacred vessels are placed. Members of the congregation who present the gifts to the celebrant must don masks and disinfect their hands beforehand.

SERVICE AT THE ALTAR

Service at the altar may be resumed. One or two persons carry this out, in addition to participating in the entrance procession, provided that the sanctuary has enough room for the altar servers, lectors and celebrant to be seated at least 1m apart from one another. When the preparation of the offerings begins, the altar servers will put on their masks and disinfect their hands before performing their services. Following Communion, they will again disinfect their hands and put on their masks before performing their individual services.

CONGREGATIONAL SINGING

If it is desired that the congregation should sing, they should remain 2m apart from one another and wear masks while singing. When the congregation are not singing, they may again remove their masks.

CHOIR

As mentioned above, singing by the choir is now permitted. Guidelines governing the performing arts will be in effect, which can be found at:

<https://www.cnesst.gouv.qc.ca/fr/organisation/documentation/formulaires-publications/guide-covid-19-arts-scene-salles-spectacles>

In following these guidelines, choir members should be regarded as 'employees' or 'volunteers' of the place of worship. Choir members must maintain a distance of 2m from each other and, if they are singing in front of an audience, the intervening distance should be greater than 2m (in theatres, at least 3m must be maintained between soloists and the first row of spectators).

DISTRIBUTION OF COMMUNION

Public-health authorities still discourage moving about inside the church during religious ceremonies. Having said that, those in charge of the place of worship may consider it appropriate to reintroduce the Communion procession, for example, during weekday services, when generally fewer people are present or in cases where the place of worship has enough room or is set up in such a way that the circulation of the faithful can take place smoothly. It is essential that people wear their masks when moving about and that they maintain a distance of at least 1m from one another.

RECESSIONAL

The recessional may be reinstated. This should be carried out in the same manner as the entrance procession. With his mask on and avoiding any physical contact by maintaining at all times a distance of 1m from the faithful, the celebrant may have a word with them as they exit. Ideally, this should take place outdoors in front of the church.

July 12, 2021