

**MEMO**

To: Priests of the Diocese of Fargo
From: Most. Rev. John Folda
Date: June 12, 2020
Re: COVID-19 updates

Insofar as health officials of the State of North Dakota have changed the risk for transmission of COVID-19 to low on May 29th, it is now possible to reduce the restrictiveness of some of the directives which came into effect on May 4.

- All parishes must be offering public Masses. There are to be no exceptions to this rule without consulting the bishop.
- Communion may be given on the tongue. If contact with the tongue or mouth of the communicant occurs, the minister of communion must sanitize hands before distributing to the next person. It may be helpful to keep a small table with a corporal, ablution cup, and hand sanitizer close by so that sanitizing may be less obtrusive, and reverence for the Eucharist maintained.
- Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion may be used, but only insofar as necessary. With smaller numbers attending Mass, and since communion is not distributed from the chalice, in most places their service will not yet be necessary.
- Masks are still highly recommended as a measure to protect others, but they may not be required.
- Missalettes, or books with readings in them, may at the discretion of the pastor, be returned to the pews.
- Congregational singing and choir singing is still to be avoided, and hymnals should not be returned to the pews.
- Social gatherings may be held outside of Mass, but state health recommendations for social distancing should be maintained.
- It is appropriate to encourage the faithful who are not at higher risk from COVID-19 to return to Mass, even though the dispensation from the Sunday obligation still remains in effect.
- Based on local conditions, Pastors are given discretion to admit additional persons into the church for Mass. Social distancing should still be practiced insofar as possible.
- Instructions on Confirmation, sent from the Liturgy Office on 5/29/2020 indicated there was doubt whether an instrument (cotton ball, or swab) could be validly used for the anointing of Confirmation. The Congregation for Divine Worship has responded that "The use by the minister of an instrument (gloves, cotton swab...), does not affect the validity of the Sacrament." This is not to suggest that you must use an instrument at this time, but to indicate that the doubt has been clarified and should the need arise, you may use an instrument for the anointing in Confirmation.

Previous directives not modified in this memorandum remain in effect. (see documents on the www.fargodiocese.org/clergyresources page) If a local community experiences an outbreak, please be prepared to return to earlier restrictions. The link to the “ND Smart Restart” document can be found on www.fargodiocese.org/covid-19.