

COVID 19 GUIDELINES –JANUARY 2021

Ash Wednesday

Shortly after the archdiocese provided guidance on Ash Wednesday, the Vatican released its directive. This [Vatican directive](#) takes precedence over the earlier guidance from the archdiocese. This means that for Ash Wednesday, all parishes must follow the key changes laid out by the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Sacraments:

- Priests proclaim the formula "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return" (or other options) only once prior to the distribution of ashes. The individual proclamation of this formula over each person should not occur.
- Then the priest takes the ashes and sprinkles them on the head of each person without saying anything.

New Variant

As many of you may be aware, there is a more robust and contagious variant of the coronavirus known as B.1.1.7. Recent reports indicate that it has come to our region. At this time, we must give renewed encouragement to everyone to strictly uphold all mitigation standards of mask wearing, hand hygiene, reduced time together, fresh air exchange and physical distancing -- especially distancing among parishioners and ministers in the sanctuary. We want to uphold our safety protocols to limit spread, help our parishioners feel safe coming to mass and to care for the common good.

New Religious Guidance from the State

Earlier this month Governor Inslee issued updated guidance, which has some implications for religious celebrations. Please see the [full new guidance here](#).

Live music and performances are permitted so long as individuals wear face coverings and adhere to physical distancing requirements.

- Specifically, choirs with up to 15 singers are permitted to sing indoors during the service so long as each singer maintains 9 feet (12 feet is encouraged) of physical distancing and wears a three-layer surgical mask.
- Soloist singers are permitted to sing during the service without a mask provided that the individual maintains 15 feet of physical distancing.
- The performance of woodwind and brass instruments is permitted during the service so long as the performer(s) maintain 9 feet (12 feet is encouraged) of physical distancing and use bell covers. Woodwind and brass performers are permitted to remove their masks during their performance.
- At this time in the Archdiocese of Seattle, congregational singing is NOT encouraged, for everyone's safety.

Face coverings are required to be worn by all during the service; only one speaker at a time may remove their face covering. If a speaker decides not to wear a face covering, it is recommended that a Plexiglas 3-sided barrier is used during the service. The barrier must be disinfected after every use.

Up to two households are permitted to sit as group in Phase 1 outdoor services and Phase 2 indoor and outdoor services.

Indoor services at a place of worship may be held with up to 25% of room (or building) capacity, with a recommended maximum of 200 people, whichever is less, so as long 6 feet of physical distancing can be achieved between households in all directions. Face coverings are required for all participants.

Be sure to send your updated plans for Mass, ministry and offices to seattlemasss2020@seattlearch.org. You may find help with these updated checklists:

- [Mass](#)
- [Ministry](#)
- [Offices](#)

Volunteers at Mass

In the early days of the pandemic, we issued guidance asking for a 1:25 volunteer to Mass attendee ratio. Now that we have a better understanding of the virus and have pressure tested all of our safety measures, we no longer require this ratio. Instead, each Mass and each event at a parish must have a COVID-10 Safety Officer present.

Phase Finder

Recently the Washington State Department of Health launched a new [Phase Finder tool](#) to assist people in determining when they will be eligible for a vaccine. We encourage everyone to try this online tool, but please know that patience is required.

Priests should know that because they visit the sick and anoint people, they must say “YES” to the health care question. The Office of the Vicar for Clergy prepared this [tutorial](#) for how clergy and parish staff should fill out the tool to maximize their eligibility to receive a vaccine.

Travel Quarantine Update

Guidance around quarantining after travel has changed. Please note that it is no longer required to stay home for 14 days after a trip. The recommendation is now seven days without any symptoms, and this is up to the individual's discretion. We recommend self-quarantining only if the person has had close contact with others. (Close contact is 15 minutes within 6 feet of someone outside the household.)