



# NATIONAL CATHOLIC SECRETARIAT

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## GHANA CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE ISSUES GUIDELINES FOR PUBLIC WORSHIP

### INTRODUCTION

With the easing of some restrictions on social/religious gathering announced by the President of the Nation on Sunday, July 26, 2020 and in consultation with the Episcopal Chairman for Liturgy, Most Rev. Joseph Afrifah-Agyekum and his Team, we, your Bishops issue the following guidelines:

### CHURCH PREMISES AND BUILDING

#### 1. Ministries and liturgical robes:

A limited and reasonable number of ministers could be permitted to undertake their functions and put on their prescribed liturgical robes. The ministries are:

- i. Singing Groups
- ii. Ushers
- iii. Lectors
- iv. Knights of the Altar

#### 2. The use of incense:

The use of incense at liturgical and para-liturgical celebrations could be encouraged.

#### 3. Fresh water for *asperges*:

Fresh water should be blessed for *asperges* as required by the rubrics.

#### 4. Liturgical books:

All the liturgical books are to be sanitized for liturgical use.

#### 5. Reverencing the altar:

Reverencing the altar should still be limited to a deep bow.

#### 6. Tabernacle key

The tabernacle key must be sanitized for liturgical use and possibly handled by one person.

### THE INTRODUCTORY RITES

The use of face/nose masks is strongly recommended for the main celebrant except when praying the presidential prayers.

## **THE LITURGY OF THE WORD**

### **i. The use of Microphones**

Proper hygiene should be observed in the use of the microphone throughout the liturgical celebration.

### **ii. Use of Commentators**

This ministry could be employed in the liturgical celebration while respecting social distancing.

### **iii. Lectors**

The regular number of lectors could be employed to undertake their proper and appropriate ministry but respecting social distancing.

### **iv. Homilies**

The time for homilies could be extended but respecting the two-hour duration recommended for every liturgical celebration.

### **v. Prayer of the Faithful**

It is recommended that the Prayer of the Faithful could be led by one person, preferably the lector.

## **LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST**

### **Collection/Offertory/Presentation of Gifts**

- i) Two collections may be taken: one after the Prayer of the Faithful and the second one after the reception of Holy Communion. In both cases parishioners are to ensure that their hands are sanitized. Still appeal for funds and fundraising exercises are to be discouraged.
- ii) It is recommended that those who want to bring offertory gifts must be encouraged to send them directly to the rectory or designated place within the Church building outside Holy Mass hours.

## **THE COMMUNION RITE**

- i. **Sign of Peace:** it is still strongly recommended that it be omitted until further notice.
- ii. **Communicants:** they should be encouraged to receive Holy Communion in their palms. All communicants are to approach the minister with the face/nose masks on until the reception of Holy Communion and replace them immediately. In all this they are to respect social distancing.
- iii. The presence of the Knights with the sword at the distribution of Communion should still be discouraged.

## **CONCELEBRATION OF MASS**

- i. All concelebrating priests are to be seated observing the social distancing protocols.

- ii. We still recommend that extra chalices must be provided so that concelebrating priests can communicate by intinction. The main chalice should be used only by the main/principal celebrant who should also make sure he purifies it after use.
- iii. All concelebrating priests are to wear masks throughout the Mass, except when proclaiming the Gospel or participating in Holy Communion.
- iv. It is still recommended that at the doxology, only the principal celebrant raises both the chalice and the paten.

## **PRESENCE OF DEACONS AT LITURGICAL CELEBRATIONS**

They perform all their liturgical functions proper to their office including purification of chalices.

## **WHEN BISHOPS PRESIDE**

We recommend that bishops can now use their crosiers, mitres and other regalia at all liturgical and para-liturgical celebrations.

## **PRIESTLY ORDINATIONS**

All the details concerning priestly ordinations should not be compromised but strictly followed. However, it is important to ensure that all the protocols are equally observed.

- a. It is still recommended that all concelebrating priests must vest and get seated in their places respecting social distancing. The entrance procession should be limited to the principal celebrant and the candidates with reasonable number of Knights of the Altar (cross-bearer, acolytes, Book of the Gospels, bearers of the bishop's mitre and crosier).
- b. It is still recommended that Knights of Marshall, Knights of St. John International or Sirs and Dames be discouraged from taking part in the entrance procession.
- c. The recommendations made earlier in this document for the celebration of Holy Mass are applicable here.
- d. For the litany of the saints, reasonable number of cantors should be used.
- e. The imposition of hands by the principal celebrant and the concelebrants **MUST NOT BE OMITTED** (only it should not be elaborate). All should sanitize their hands before this exercise.
- f. As a requirement the anointing of the palm of the candidates cannot be omitted.
- g. The presentation of the chalice and the paten must be done. These are to be sanitized afterwards.
- h. It is still recommended that the gesture of welcoming the newly ordained into the presbyterium by both the Bishop and other concelebrating priests be omitted.
- i. It is still recommended that the taking of photographs etc. will all have to respect social distancing.
- j. The above recommendations are applicable to the Renewal of Vows, Profession of Final Vows, Jubilees and so on.

## **GENERAL**

- i. It is still recommended that the sacristies, cupboards and vestments are disinfected on regular basis to protect the users.
- ii. It is still recommended that sacred linens must be used once, after which they are to be washed and ironed before reuse.

## **THE OTHER SACRAMENTS**

### **1. BAPTISM**

The Sacrament of Baptism could be administered while observing the required social distancing. It is now recommended that the ministers sanitize their hands in the performance of the following rites:

- a. Anointing
- b. Laying on of hands
- c. Ephphatha
- d. The rite of pouring water, presentation of white line and lighted candles be done respecting one-meter social distancing.

### **2. SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION**

Given the Church's norms for confession, the priest must be physically present to the penitent in person, and must be able to hear the penitent without the aid of electronic devices. As always, the priest should take great care to ensure that the conversation with the penitent remains absolutely confidential. It is still recommended that priests hear confessions under the following conditions:

- Priest and penitent wear face masks.
- Both should respect social distancing-one (1) meter apart using chairs.
- The sacredness of the sacrament is not to be compromised.

### **3. ANOINTING OF THE SICK**

Priests are encouraged to continue to pastorally care for the sick, the elderly and those who cannot attend Mass. Care for the Sick and Elderly which includes Communion, Anointing of the Sick, and Penance, may be celebrated for those in need at the discretion of the priest. In such situations it is still recommended:

- That both Priest and invalid wear face masks.
- They respect the required social distancing while administering the Sacrament of Anointing of the sick.
- Use of hand sanitizer before and after the sacrament.

#### 4. MARRIAGE

The Sacrament of Marriage may be administered while observing social distancing except for the couple for whom physical nearness is inevitable.

- Mass weddings should still be discouraged during this period.
- All the prescriptions about the celebration of the Eucharist are still applicable here.

#### 5. FUNERAL CELEBRATION

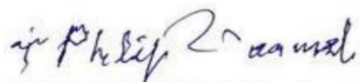
Funerals may take place in compliance with the number of individuals permitted to gather while observing social distancing. In this case we offer the following recommendations:

- **Rite of reception** at the entrance should be open to limited members while maintaining the expected social distancing.
- **At the graveside:** Social distancing and standard hygienic practices should still be adhered to.

#### CONCLUSION

We wish to encourage all Catholic faithful to resume attending Masses and appeal to same to continue to observe the social distancing recommendation of one-meter between persons, practice frequent hand washing, sanitize frequently-touched surfaces and wear a face mask when out in public.

Let us all together continue to pray that God will heal the world and our country of the Covid-19 pandemic. May Mary, our Mother of Perpetual Help continue to intercede for us.



**MOST REV. PHILIP NAAMEH**  
METROPOLITAN ARCHBISHOP OF TAMALE &  
PRESIDENT, GHANA CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE

**FRIDAY, JULY 31, 2020.**