



# NATIONAL CATHOLIC SECRETARIAT

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### GHANA CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE

#### FURTHER DIRECTIVES AND GUIDELINES FOR LITURGICAL CELEBRATIONS

As majority of our Archdioceses and Dioceses brace themselves for the resumption of liturgical celebrations, we, your Bishops wish to issue some additional directives and guidelines that could help reduce the risk of infections. Dioceses are kindly to adapt or issue further particular guidelines to their jurisdiction.

#### CHURCH PREMISE AND BUILDING

1. The use of singing groups be suspended e.g. choirs, singing bands.
2. The wearing of liturgical robes by ushers/lectors be discontinued for now.
3. Reduce drastically the number of Knights of the Altar to the barest minimum and where possible, things needed for the celebration of Mass be placed either on the credence table or the altar for easy access by the celebrant.
4. No sprinkling of holy water on the congregation (*asperges*) or use of incense.
5. All the liturgical books are to be sanitised before, during and after use.
6. Reverencing the altar should be limited to a deep bow.
7. The tabernacle key must be sanitised, before and after use and possibly handled by one person.

#### THE INTRODUCTORY RITES

- i. The main celebrant should remove the mask when he has to lead the prayers but must put it on after that.

#### THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

##### a. Use of Microphones

Proper hygiene should be observed in the use of the microphone.

- b. One lector taking the reading proper to this ministry is highly encouraged to avoid unnecessary movement.

##### c. Homilies

Must be kept brief as much as possible because of the one-hour duration recommended for every Mass.

##### d. Prayer of the Faithful

The Prayer of the Faithful could be led by one person, preferably the lector.

## **THE LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST**

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

- i. Those who want to bring offertory must be encouraged to send it directly to the rectory or designated place within the Church building outside Holy Mass hours.
- ii. To avoid spread/contamination, collection may be taken after the reception of Holy Communion to ensure that the hands of the faithful are sanitized. One collection and the purpose should be well explained. No appeal for funds, fundraising etc.

## **THE COMMUNION RITE**

### **Sign of Peace**

- i. This gesture, as we are aware, is optional. In the light of COVID-19, it is strongly recommended that it be omitted until further notice.
- ii. Communicants should be encouraged to receive Holy Communion in their palms. Prior education/explanation/appeal must be given before that. All communicants are to approach the minister with the mask on until reception of Holy Communion and replaced immediately after reception of the sacrament while respecting social distancing.
- iii. The presence of the Knights with the sword at the distribution of Communion should be discouraged.

## **CONCELEBRATED MASS**

- i. In the case of concelebrations, the priests are to be seated observing the social distancing protocols.
- ii. In the case of the above, extra chalices must be provided so the concelebrants 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 concelebrants are to wear masks throughout the Mass, except when proclaiming the Gospel or receiving Communion.
- iv. At the doxology, it is recommended that only the principal celebrant raises both the chalice and the paten.

## **WHEN BISHOPS PRESIDE**

Bishops are advised not to use their crosiers, mitres and other regalia and restrict themselves to the use of their skull caps. The exception to this will be at priestly ordinations or consecration of a new bishop etc. For Metropolitan Archbishops, however, the use of the pallium is highly recommended.

## **BISHOPS' PERMISSION TO BE SOUGHT IN THE FOLLOWING**

- i. Where possible anticipatory Holy Masses can be celebrated on Saturday evenings in fulfillment of the Sunday obligation.

## **DIACONATE/PRIESTLY ORDINATIONS**

We are in the season of Diaconate/Priestly Ordinations. Depending on the limitations that may come from the President of the Nation on religious gatherings, it will be important we prepare for them. It is important we observe/respect all the protocols in place. As far as our liturgical rites for such celebrations are concerned, we may not be able to compromise on some of them.

- i. Concelebrants must vest and be seated in their places (respecting social distancing) while the entrance procession is limited to the principal celebrant and the candidates with limited number of knights of the altar (cross-bearer, acolytes, Book of the Gospels, bearers of the bishop's mitre and crosier).
- ii. Discourage Knights of Marshall, St. John International or Sirs and Dames from taking part in the procession. iii. The recommendations made earlier in this document for the celebration of Holy Mass are applicable here.
- iv. For the litany of the saints, a limited number of singers can be used. The imposition of hands by the principal celebrant and the concelebrants **MUST NOT BE OMITTED** (only it should not be elaborate).
- v. As a requirement anointing of the palm of the candidates cannot be omitted.
- vi. The presentation of the Chalice, the paten and the Book of the Gospels must be done. They are to be sanitised after that.
- vii. It is recommended that we omit the gesture of welcoming the newly ordained into the presbyterium by both the Bishop and other concelebrants.
- viii. Taking of photographs etc. will all have to respect social distancing protocols.
- ix. The above recommendations can be applied to the Renewal of Vows, Profession of Final Vows, Jubilees and so on.

## **GENERAL**

- i. It is recommended that the sacristies, cupboards and vestments are disinfected on regular basis to protect the users.
- ii. 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 may once again be administered when further restrictions have been relaxed taking into account the number of individuals permitted to gather while observing the required social distancing. Baptism may be celebrated given the following conditions:

- Those to be baptized do not exceed a maximum number of 10 candidates, each accompanied by both parents and one sponsor only.
- Anointing should be carried out using cotton wool, a fresh cotton wool should be used to anoint each candidate; the priests sanitizes his hands immediately afterwards.
- The rite of pouring water, presentation of white linen and lighted candle be done respecting social distancing.
- The rite of Laying of Hands should be carried out without physical contact.
- The rite of Ephphatha may be carried out without physical contact.

### **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 (that is, independently of a wired phone, a mobile phone, an intercom, or other audio or video transmitting device).

As always, the priest should take great care to ensure that the conversation with the penitent remains absolutely confidential. Priests are allowed to hear confessions under the following conditions:

- i. Priest and penitent wear face masks
- ii. Both should respect social distancing-2 meters apart using chairs
- iii. 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, priests should ensure the following:

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

#### **4. MARRIAGE**

On the condition of further easing of restrictions, the Sacrament of Marriage may be administered taking into account the number of individuals permitted for gathering, while observing social distancing except for the couple for whom physical nearness is inevitable.

- i. Mass weddings should be discouraged during this period.
- ii. All the prescriptions about the celebration of the Eucharist are 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 the following conditions should be observed:

- i. Rite of reception at the entrance should be limited to a maximum of 5 members while maintaining the expected social distancing.
- ii. At the graveside: The number of people at the interment should not exceed the maximum number of persons required at social/religious gathering. Social distancing and standard hygienic practices should be strictly adhered to.

#### **CONCLUSION**

It is our prayer that as we all comply with these further directives and guidelines in addition to what have already been issued, God will let his face shed its light upon our country Ghana and the whole world and bring an end to this pandemic. May our Blessed Mother continue to intercede for us.



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

**Tuesday, June 9, 2020**