

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS REGARDING “IN-PERSON” MASSES  
DURING THE 2020 CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC  
AT THE PARISH OF THE ASCENSION OF THE LORD

Revised: June 3, 2020

Which of the parish’s three churches will be open for “in-person” Masses?

*For the month of June, only St. Raphael Church (Kittery), Our Lady of the Angels Church (South Berwick) and St. Christopher Church (York) will be open for “in-person” Masses.*

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What about Star of the Sea Summer Chapel at York Beach?

*For the month of June, Star of the Sea Summer Chapel will be closed. Hopefully, this will change after the month of June.*

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Are the three churches going to have the same weekend Mass schedule that they had before they were closed in March?

*No, the three churches will not have the same weekend Mass schedule that they had before they were closed in March, at least not during the month of June. For the month of June, each of the three churches will have one “in-person” Mass per weekend. The schedule will be: Our Lady of the Angels Church (South Berwick) at 4:00 pm on Saturday; St. Raphael Church (Kittery) at 9:00 am on Sunday; and St. Christopher Church (York) at 11:00 am on Sunday. Some of these Masses will also be “live-streamed” as well. Please understand that this schedule is, hopefully, just for the month of June. In the best case scenario, we will be able to offer more weekend Masses in July.*

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What about daily Masses? Will they be offered in the “in-person” form as well?

*The plan is to begin offering “in-person” daily Masses by the middle of June. Right now, we are trying to handle just weekend Masses.*

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I know that the State of Maine has put a limit on the number of people that can gather in an enclosed place. Do churches have to follow this limit? If so, what is the limit?

*On June 1, the State of Maine increased the number of people that can gather in an enclosed place from ten (10) to fifty (50). Yes, churches must follow this directive. When the state raises the gathering limit, so will the churches. Presently, we do not know when that will be. It could be next month. Then again, it could be several months from now.*

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If only fifty people in total can attend an “in-person” Mass, how does that fifty get determined? Is it just the first fifty that shows up at the church before a particular Mass?

*No, it is definitely NOT the first fifty people who show up at the church before a particular Mass. Reservations will have to be made to attend any Mass. People should not come to the church unless they have a confirmed reservation for that Mass.*

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How do I make a reservation to attend a Mass?

*You may apply for a reservation by either telephoning the individual church or by going on-line to our website ([pal.me.org](http://pal.me.org)). Should you telephone and the secretary does not answer the phone, please leave your contact information and she will get back to you as soon as possible. If you use the website, simply follow the directions on how to make a Mass reservation. Please*

*note that simply leaving your information on the phone service or submitting your name through the website does not guarantee that you have a reservation. It is simply applying for a reservation. The parish secretary will contact you either by phone or by e-mail with confirmation.*

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**How will anyone know whether I have a confirmed reservation or not? Can't I just walk into the church?**

*Standing at the entrance of each Mass will be a designated person who will have a list of the names of those who have reserved seats. They will ask the name of each person and check them against the reservation list.*

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**Do you mean to say that I can enter the church ONLY if my name is on the list?**

*That is correct. This is for two reasons. First, because in order to offer public worship, we have to strictly abide the State of Maine law that limits gatherings to no more than fifty (50) people. Second, if a worshipper at Mass is later diagnosed with Covid-19, we need to contact every person who was also worshipping at that Mass and inform them that they might be at risk as well.*

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**What if my name is not on the list? Can't I just "walk in" like I used to?**

*Unfortunately, no. At the present time we have to comply with the fifty-person limit. If you arrive at Church and your name is not on the list, we will be happy to take your name and contact information and do our best to make sure that your name is on the list for another Mass in the future.*

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**If my name isn't on the list, can I wait outside the church in the parking lot and have someone bring me communion out there after Mass?**

*No. The only way to receive communion from a particular Mass is to actually attend that Mass.*

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**Let's say I do get on the confirmed reservation list. Does that mean I'm on it for the next week, too? Is confirmation automatically renewable?**

*No. It means that you are on the list for that particular Mass. Most likely once you attend one Mass, you won't be able to make a reservation for at least another week. We want to make sure that as many people have an opportunity to attend Mass as possible. You can certainly put your name on a "wait" list and when an opening occurs, we will contact you.*

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**Do I have to wear a face mask? If so, how long do I have to keep it on during the Mass?**

*Yes, anyone who attends Mass, must wear a face mask. The mask must be kept on for the duration of the Mass, the exception being the actual consuming of the Eucharist. Other exceptions are the presiding priest when he is speaking, the lector when he/she is speaking, and the cantor when he/she is singing.*

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What if I have a condition that prevents me from wearing a face mask?

*In the case of someone who has a condition that prevents them from wearing a face mask, a face shield is permissible. This substitution should be made only if the person truly cannot wear a face mask.*

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What if I have a condition that prevents me from wearing either a face mask or a face shield?

*Unfortunately, if a person has a condition that prevents them from wearing either a face mask or a face shield, they will not be able to attend Mass. Masks and shields are for everyone's protection.*

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If my name isn't on the list, can I wait outside the church in the parking lot and have someone bring me communion out there after Mass?

*No. The only way to receive communion from a particular Mass is to actually attend that Mass.*

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Just to be safe, is it permissible for me to wear both a face mask AND a face shield?

*It most surely is! The experts are telling us that a face mask protects others from our germs and that a face shield protects us from other people's germs.*

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Will the parish be providing the face masks and face shields or am I expected to provide my own? What if I don't bring one with me? Can I still come in just this once?

*You will be expected to provide your own face mask or face shield. Unfortunately, if you don't have a face mask or face shield, you will not be able to enter the church building.*

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What about hand sanitizer? Will that be available at the church or must I bring my own?

*There will be some hand sanitizer available at the entrance of the church, but you would always be wise to bring your own sanitizer anywhere you go during the current health crisis.*

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How about plastic gloves? Are those required for Mass? Do I need to bring my own?

*There is no requirement to wear gloves to Mass at the present time. However, like hand sanitizer, you may want to wear gloves just to be on the safe side.*

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How many ways may I enter the building?

*Each building will have one entrance available, the very front door. That will also serve as the only exit (unless there is an emergency). If all possible these doors will remain open to minimize the need to touch them.*

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Will the parish bulletins be available at Mass?

*Parish bulletins will be available, but in order to limit contact, they will not be distributed by hand, nor will they be available before Mass. They will be available to be picked up by the worshipper after Mass. Bulletins will continue to be available on-line.*

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### Why will the bulletins be available only after Mass and not before?

*The bulletins are not “Worship Aids,” meaning there is nothing in them that is needed in order to participate in worship (Scripture reading, Responses, Lyrics to Songs, etc.). The concern with passing them out before Mass is that they are touched, then they touch other surfaces, they may also be left in the pews where they have to be touched when they are removed. Bulletins will continue to be available on-line.*

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### Will the holy water font be present for me to bless myself when I enter the church?

*Unfortunately, all water fonts have been removed temporarily. They will return after the pandemic is over.*

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### Will I be able to sit wherever I wish?

*No. You will notice that many pews, and some whole sections of the church, will be roped off. When your reservation is confirmed you will be assigned a pew and seat number. This is being done to promote appropriate social distancing, that is, six feet apart for non-family members.*

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### Does that mean that I have to sit by myself?

*Only if you come in by yourself. Couples and families may sit together in the same pew. That may mean that others may not sit in the pew, depending on the particular situation.*

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### Will the missalettes and hymnals be in the pews?

*Unfortunately, not at this time. They have been removed with the understanding that they will be made available again after the pandemic has passed.*

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### How will I be able to follow along with the readings or sing the hymns if I don't have a missalette?

*For the time being, you will have to participate by just listening to the readings. Those who are technologically savvy may want to follow along on an electronic device. Regarding singing, we are asking people not to sing during Mass for the present time. Singing is one of the most effective ways of spraying the Covid-19 germs into the air around us – the exact thing we are trying to avoid. Ironically, after years of encouraging Catholics to sing during worship, we are asking you not to. Of course, if a cantor is present, he/she will sing. They will be at least six feet away from everyone.*

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### If we are trying to avoid contact, will a collection still be taken?

*No, a collection will not be taken, at least not in the usual way. Collection baskets will be at the point of entrance/exit. Worshippers are encouraged to leave their offering in the baskets either upon entering or exiting the building. Of course, they are also encouraged to mail in their offerings, or better yet, make use of the “Weshare” program, an automatic giving program that our parish subscribes to.*

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If no collection is taken during Mass, will there still be a “Presentation of the Gifts” (presenting the bread and the wine to be consecrated) at the time of the offertory?

*No, the bread and the wine will already be on the credence table in the sanctuary. It will not need to be presented from the congregation?*

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Again, if we are concerned about contact, will there be shaking hands at the “Passing of the Peace” portion of the Mass?

*No, we will not be shaking hands. We will have to find other ways to acknowledge one another. Slight bow? Rub shoulders?*

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Will the Precious Blood be offered to the congregants at Mass?

*No, the Precious Blood will not be offered to the congregation at this time. The one exception to this concerns those who absolutely cannot receive the host. Special arrangements will need to be made ahead of Mass for them to receive from the cup. They will need to have a note from their doctor explaining that they cannot receive the host.*

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Will the distribution of Communion be different in any way?

*The only difference will be that communicants will need to remain six feet apart from one another. There will be markers on the floor to help facilitate this distance. Most likely the priest will invite one side of the church to come forward first and, when everyone who wishes to receive has done so, then invite the other side to come forward. This will keep people from standing next to each other as was the common practice until the pandemic.*

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Can I receive Communion on the tongue or do I have to receive it in the hand?

*Communicants are strongly urged to receive the host in their hand during this time of pandemic. The concern is the risk of the communicant receiving Covid-19 virus germs from the priest or minister when the host is placed on his/her tongue. There is also concern of the risk of the priest or minister receiving Covid-19 virus germs from the communicant. Added to the concern of the priest or minister’s receiving the Covid-19 germs themselves is the risk of them immediately passing those same germs along to another communicant. If a communicant insists on receiving the host on the tongue, the priest or minister **MUST** sanitize his/her hands before giving communion to the next person in line.*

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Are there any special procedures for exiting the building after Mass?

*To be safe, the priest will most likely encourage the congregation in exit in an orderly fashion, probably dismissing one side of the church before the other, with those in the pews closest to the door leaving before those closest to the altar.*

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Since we are not allowing “in-person Masses, does that mean that we can start gathering again in the churches for devotional experiences and other activities?

*Unfortunately, no. At the present time the church buildings are going to be open **ONLY** for “in-person” Masses. No other activities should be taking place in any part of the church buildings. As soon as we are able to make the church space available for other events at other times during the week, we will let you know. We hope that this is soon!*