

MEMORANDUM



ROMAN CATHOLIC
DIOCESE
of Calgary

DATE February 15, 2022

TO Priests, Deacons, and Parish Office Staff

FROM Fr. Wilbert Chin Jon

SUBJECT STEP 1 Health & Safety Guidelines and A Preliminary Update on Step 2 Lent & Easter Liturgical Guidelines

Shortly after the announcement of the easing of health and safety restrictions by the Alberta Provincial Government, a preliminary update was provided to you via email with the mention of the release of this memorandum on the health and safety guidelines for Step 1.

Step 1 came into effect on February 9, 2022. If hospitalization numbers continue to trend downward, the government anticipates Step 2 to begin on March 1, 2022.

You can access the complete details on the 3-step implementation of the government from <https://www.alberta.ca/covid-19-public-health-actions.aspx>

Step 1 Health and Safety Guidelines

- For the purpose of this memorandum, statements from the government are *italicized*.
- People are asked to exercise respect, charity, and kindness toward others and to recognize the varying comfort level of people especially during these steps of transition.
- People who have symptoms not related to a pre-existing condition should avoid going to the church or being in public as a courtesy to others.
- Parishes that have been livestreaming Masses are encouraged to continue providing this service for two reasons:
 - Allowing the parishioners to decide for themselves whether to attend Mass in person or via livestream depending on their comfort level and/or health condition(s).
 - Maintaining this option in case the Province implements new restrictions during a resurgence of cases and/or another wave from a new variant of concern.
- Promote proper hand hygiene by having hand washing/sanitizing posters visible and placing hand sanitizer stations in convenient and accessible locations.

- Make every effort to encourage respiratory etiquette (e.g., coughing or sneezing into a bent elbow, promptly disposing of used tissues in a lined garbage bin).

Places of Worship

- *Capacity limits on places of worship removed.*
- While there is no capacity limit in place, physical distancing of 2 metres between households is encouraged. Please see the diocesan guidance under the heading of Physical Distancing.

Weddings, Funerals, and Baptisms

- *No capacity limit if the ceremony is at a place of worship.*
- While there is no capacity limit in place, physical distancing of 2 metres between households is encouraged. Please see the diocesan guidance under the heading of Physical Distancing.

Masks

- *Masking is mandatory in all indoor public spaces, workplaces, and places of worship. However, masking requirements will be removed for:*
 - *children under 13 in all settings as of February 14*
 - *students of any age attending K-12 schools and participating in school activities as of February 14*
- *Continuous masking must be followed for up to 5 days following mandatory isolation due to COVID infection. For more information, [see the isolation page](#).*
- *Employees must mask in all indoor work settings, except while alone in work stations.*
- *Masks should fit well and be of high quality. People at risk of severe outcomes should wear medical masks when in settings with people outside of their household.*

Physical Distancing

- *Physical distancing of 2 metres between households is encouraged, operators should facilitate distancing between patrons where possible.*
- With physical distancing encouraged and not mandated, people will have to determine for themselves proper physical distancing. Caution must be observed not to force people to sit closely with others.
 - Note: If you think it will help address a potential issue in your parish, perhaps leave a small section of the pews where only every other pew is available for use. This accommodation is for the parishioners who are seriously concerned with the lifting of capacity limits.

Liturgical Music Ministry

- No changes in current liturgical guidelines in Step 1.
- Congregational singing is still not allowed in Step 1.

Indoor and Outdoor Social Gatherings

- In Step 1, the parish hall is not to be used for social events.

Funeral Receptions

- Following the consultation of the Presbyteral Council, the Diocese is not allowing funeral receptions in parish halls in Step 1 for the following reasons:
 - The duration of Step 1 is only expected to be less than two weeks with Step 2 anticipated to begin on March 1.
 - Parishes will need some time to mobilize those who had volunteered in this ministry before the pandemic. Therefore the invitation to parishes in Step 1 is to organize the ministry teams that will host funeral receptions in Step 2.
 - This uniformity of practise in parishes will prevent inconsistencies that can often cause families disappointments.

In-Person Meetings

- In-Person meeting are allowed in parish halls and other parish facilities in Step 1.
- Food and drinks may be served.
- Masks are required unless eating or drinking.
- Physical distancing is encouraged.
- As a general principle, use a room or facility that is larger than what you will require to ensure better air circulation.
- Promote proper hand hygiene by having hand washing/sanitizing posters visible and placing hand sanitizer stations in convenient and accessible locations.

A Preliminary Update on Step 2 Lent & Easter Liturgical Guidelines

Parishes are advised to follow the Roman Missal in planning for Lent and Easter in Step 2. Please disregard the 2022 Lent and Easter memorandum released on January 25, 2022.

A Step 2 Health and Safety Guidelines may be released at a later date.

Based on the general information provided by the government for Step 2:

- *Indoor masking no longer required.*
- No capacity limit to attendance.
- *Indoor and outdoor social gathering limits lifted.*
- The current encouragement of physical distancing may remain or may be lifted but the Diocese will always respect and acknowledge the varying comfort level of people and allow for them to decide for themselves how to interact with others.
- Choirs may resume their ministry.
 - The use of cantor(s) remain a valid option.
 - Parishes are able to decide the size of the choir for their church.
 - Congregational singing is allowed.
 - In addition to the entrance hymn, Communion hymn and the recessional hymn... the singing/chanting of the gloria (when indicated), responsorial psalm, gospel acclamation, offertory, and Mass parts may resume.
 - **Note:** Par. 4 of the Roman Missal, “During Lent, it is not permitted to decorate the altar with flowers, and the use of musical instrument is allowed only so as to support the singing. Nevertheless, Laetare Sunday (the Fourth Sunday of Lent), Solemnities, and Feasts are exceptions to this rule” (page 192).
- Parishes that have been livestreaming Masses are encouraged to continue providing this service for two reasons:
 - Allowing the parishioners to decide for themselves whether to attend Mass in person or via livestream depending on their comfort level and/or health condition(s).
 - Maintaining this option in case the Province implements new restrictions during a resurgence of cases and/or another wave from a new variant of concern.