



# Church of St. Albert

The Catholic Church in the Heart of Albertville

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## Detailed Protocols for Resuming Limited Public Mass

May 26, 2020

Revised June 12, 2020

On Wednesday, May 20, Archbishop Bernard Hebda announced that parishes that are prepared to meet the health and safety protocols established by the Archdiocese could resume holding public Mass beginning Tuesday, May 26. The Church of St. Albert plans to do so, however, due to the ongoing coronavirus outbreak, Mass attendance will be limited, and the celebration of the Mass will look somewhat different for the foreseeable future.

Given the Bishops' courageous decision to proceed with worship against the governor's wishes, we must do so with mutual respect, reverence and great care for each other's health and well-being. First, please continue to pray for all those affected by this pandemic as well as our state and church leaders. Second, let us show by our actions our fundamental need and right to love and worship God, but also our deep desire to love of neighbor by being mindful of all safety protocols and respectful of the choices of other parishioners.

With the help of health officials, the Archdiocese has put together a detailed protocol for this Phase II reopening of churches for public Mass. With significantly more people able to attend, in some ways these Masses may look even more restrictive than our livestreamed Masses to date. Our fellow worshippers may behave differently. But our purpose is still to draw one another into deeper discipleship with Jesus Christ—and where better can we do that than at the Mass?

### Basic Parameters for Resuming the Mass

- *Please understand that no one is required to attend Mass if they are not comfortable or if it is unsafe for them to do so.*
  - The obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation continues to be dispensed for all Catholics.
  - If you have tested positive for COVID-19, have symptoms of COVID-19, or are caring for or living with sick persons, please stay home until your health care provider says it is safe to be around other people.
  - The Archdiocese also advises that parishioners over 65 years of age and those with preexisting health conditions remain at home and make a Spiritual Communion, however, you will not be turned away.
- Beginning Tuesday, May 26, we will resume our regular Mass schedule, as posted on our parish website homepage, [churchofstalbert.org](http://churchofstalbert.org), in our parish bulletin, and on our outdoor signs.
  - Our first weekday Masses will be at 7:30am on Tuesday, May 26 and Wednesday, May 27.
  - Our first weekend Masses will be the celebration on Pentecost, Saturday, May 30 at 4:00pm and Sunday, May 31, at 9:00am.

- Doors will not be open for seating until 15 minutes prior to Mass begins giving our liturgical ministry volunteers enough time to arrive and be present to oversee the necessary protocols.
- For those who do not attend Mass in person, we will continue to livestream all Masses on our parish website homepage, [churchofstalbert.org](http://churchofstalbert.org) and on our Facebook page, [facebook.com/stalbertmn](https://facebook.com/stalbertmn)

### **Health and Safety of Parishioners**

- Our first consideration is the health and well-being of our parishioners, especially the most vulnerable: the elderly and those with chronic illnesses. We will continue to rely on medical professionals and standards to inform our protocols and practices.
- Please practice basic healthy hygiene:
  - Wash or sanitize your hands when you arrive at the church and as needed while there.
  - Cover coughs and sneezes with the crook of your arm.
  - Whenever possible, use your bathroom at home rather than the public restroom at the church or the Parish Center when overflow seating is needed for weekend Masses.
    - If it is necessary to use the restroom while at the church or the Parish Center (for weekend overflow), please limit the number of people in the restroom to one (unless with child), keeping in mind the six feet for social distancing when waiting in line and when walking in and out of the restroom.
    - At the church and the Parish Center the line begins 6 feet away from the door and is marked accordingly.
- The Archdiocese has directed us to celebrate Masses with congregations of no more than one-third of our seating capacity. This means we can admit no more than 132 people into the church for any one Mass.
  - Given the fact that not everyone will return to Mass at this time, attendance should not pose a problem for most Masses.
  - Attendees will be directed to the Parish Center for overflow seating when we have reached our capacity in the church. Holy Communion will be distributed at the Parish Center. The estimated limited seating capacity at the Parish Center is 75.
  - We will be monitoring attendance on-site to ensure safe social distancing.
  - St. Albert parishioners are asked to attend Mass at St. Albert and St. Michael parishioners have been asked to attend Mass at St. Michael due to limited seating capacity at both parishes.
- To ensure six feet of social distancing between families, we will limit seating to every other pew (which positions people six feet apart), and limit the number of people per open pew to ensure at least six feet of space between individuals of different households. Please only sit in the pews that are NOT taped off and we ask that the tape not be removed. We will also have ushers and greeters on hand to direct people where to sit and to help maintain social distancing.
- Face masks and gloves will be offered to Ushers and Greeters to wear. Face masks will also be offered to EMHCs to wear while distributing Holy Communion.
- Face masks are recommended for all assembly members (except those under age two, due to risk of suffocation)—however, this is not a requirement. Please respect the choices of those around you in this regard and do not judge those who wear masks or those who do not.
- The crying room will be closed and taped off so that no one is able to enter. Due to the small space in the crying room six feet for social distancing is not able to be maintained.

### **Cleaning and Disinfecting the Church and Parish Center Before and After Liturgies**

- The two sets of front doors at the church and the Parish Center (for weekend overflow) will be propped open.

- If weather does not allow for the church doors or Parish Center doors to be open, our greeters will hold the doors open so attendees will not have to touch the doors to enter.
- Additionally, the inside doors to the church and Parish Center will be propped open. You may enter any one of the doors that is open.
- When you leave the church, we ask that you exit only through the side doors that are propped open to maintain traffic flow and social distancing.
- Please only enter and exit through the open doors.
- Exterior doors of the church will remain open to circulate fresh air throughout the building.
- Hand sanitizer will be available in the entryway; however, if you are able to bring your own with you, please do, it will help our supply last!
- All high-use areas will be disinfected after each liturgy, including pews, the ambo, handrails, door handles, and push plates as well as the chairs at the Parish Center when they are used.
- We will sanitize restrooms after each liturgy.
- We will thoroughly clean before Masses if the church has been used since the last disinfecting.
- Hymnals and all other materials are removed from all pews, and all Holy Water fonts remain covered/empty.
- We will be offering copies of a worship aid. We ask that you pick one up when you enter and discard it in the box provided for recycling on your way out.
- Bulletins will be available near the entrance. You may pick one up to take home with you at your own discretion.
- Clergy will be purifying vessels after distribution of Communion is completed.
- Sacristans will wash the vessels with hot, soapy water.
- Servers should leave the cassock and alb they used on the coat rack in the hallway until it is safe to be used again.
- Sacred Arts and Environment have been asked to keep decorations to a minimum.

### **Participation in the Mass**

- We will not be singing hymns or Mass parts as singing expels more respiratory particles than speaking. We will still have musical accompaniment, and you are asked to join your hearts silently and prayerfully to the psalms and hymns.
- The procession will consist of the cross bearer, the deacon (if present) and any priests, maintaining six feet between each person for social distancing.
- Reader will not take part in the procession. The ushers will take up the collection using the long handled collection baskets maintaining six feet for social distancing. When a safe reach is not possible, a secure container with a slot will also be available in the narthex for people to place their contribution after Mass if they wish.
- We will not have altar servers assisting at the altar. They will only light candles in the sanctuary before Mass, carry in the processional cross, and ring the bells during the Eucharistic prayer.
- The Opening Greeting and Sign of Peace remain suspended, and please do not hold hands during the Our Father prayer.

### **Distributing and Receiving Holy Communion**

- Per Archdiocesan guidelines, those over age 65 should not distribute Holy Communion, including priests or deacons. We must utilize younger Eucharistic Ministers in this case.
- Only the priest will drink out of one chalice, as required for the validity of the Mass. Distribution of the Precious Blood to the faithful will continue to be suspended.

- Only the clergy will receive Holy Communion *during* Mass. Holy Communion for parishioners will take place *after* Mass. Please remain seated until you are invited out of your pew. Further explanation of parishioner reception of Holy Communion is below.
- The faithful are strongly recommended to receive Holy Communion in the hand. However, reception on the tongue will not be forbidden. Explanation is below.
- Please maintain six feet of social distancing as you proceed from your pew to receive Holy Communion, especially between members of different households. Be especially mindful of children, who are often less aware of keeping their distance.
- There will be 2 ministers of Holy Communion in the church for those attending Mass in the church and for those who are watching the Mass livestream in the parking lot (weekend Masses only) and 1 minister for the Parish Center when open for overflow seating (weekend Masses only).
  - After the final blessing, the priest will begin the St. Michael prayer. During that prayer, the Extraordinary Minister(s) of Holy Communion will come forward, cleanse their hands and stand at the sanctuary step. After the priest and deacon have removed their outer vestment and have returned to the altar, the EMHCs will come forward to receive Holy Communion. After receiving, the EMHCs will walk to the credence table to put on their face mask, cleanse their hands, and return to the altar to receive the ciborium before going to their station for distribution.
  - If a minister has touched the hand or mouth of a communicant, immediately after distributing to back that communicant, the minister will re-sanitize his or her hands before distribution to the next communicant.
  - When receiving Holy Communion, be sure to extend your hand forward as far as you can to maintain a safe distance between you and the minister of Holy Communion.
  - If you are accustomed to receiving Holy Communion on the tongue, please consider receiving reverently in the hand. If you still wish to receive on the tongue, you will not be refused but we ask that you be last in line to receive.
  - If you are wearing a mask, once the minister holds up the host and says, “The Body of Christ,” say “Amen,” receive in one hand, step off to the side, pull down your mask with the other hand and receive the Lord.
  - If you are wearing gloves, you will be asked to remove your gloves to receive in the hand.
- For those who are in the church, two ministers of Holy Communion will be stationed at the sanctuary steps. The smaller sections of pews are to receive first. The communicants will receive and then walk along the stain glass window aisle to leave the church or return to their same pew for prayer. The larger sections of pews will receive next. The communicants will receive and then walk down the center aisle to leave church or return to their same pew for prayer. Please maintain six feet for social distancing between anyone not in your household.
- If you choose to watch the Mass via livestream from the parking lot, you may enter the church *after* the St. Michael prayer has been recited to receive Holy Communion. Follow one of the communion lines inside the church, always being mindful of social distancing.
- If the Parish Center is used for overflow, a minister of Holy Communion will arrive after Mass to distribute Holy Communion to those who are there. Communion will be distributed one row at a time. Please remain seated until your row is invited to receive. Maintain six feet of social distancing.
- Ministers return all remaining hosts to the altar where the priest will gather them without contact. Ministers should immediately purify fingers with water in the bowl as usual. Sanitize them afterwards with sanitizer or soap and hot water in either the sacristy or restroom.
- No gloves, tongs, receptacles or other instruments will be used. Communion hosts may not be distributed in baggies, cups or other pre-packaged containers.

- Once you have received Holy Communion, you are free to stay and give thanks but you must circle around and enter the same pew on the other side. Otherwise, please quietly exit the church when you are ready only through the doors that are open.
  - Distributing Holy Communion in this way should allow a staggered dismissal that aids for social distancing.
  - Please do not remain in the entryways or narthex area but move directly outside. Even when outside, continue to maintain at least six feet between members of different households.

### **Adoration and Other Sacraments**

- Adoration will continue in the church for the regularly scheduled adorers and hours, Sunday evening at 6:00pm through Saturday morning at 8:00am and the church will continue to be open for visitors Monday through Friday from 9:00am to 5:00pm as it has been since the beginning of the pandemic measures, with the same protocols regarding social distancing and safety hygiene in place.
  - Signs will be posted on each pew for Adorers and Mass attendees to leave the kneeler down if used so that area can be properly sanitized after use but mainly to alert others coming into the church that pew was used.
- Reconciliation will be taking place in the parish library to the left of the sanctuary. To maintain privacy, the line will begin along the wall near the confessional. Please maintain 6 feet for social distancing for those who are not in the same household.
- We will communicate with those families waiting to receive the Sacraments of Baptism, First Reconciliation, First Holy Communion, Confirmation, Matrimony, and Funerals directly to share additional details and parameters. *Again, please know that you are not required to attend Mass or receive these sacraments at this time. We will make other opportunities available to you if you prefer to wait.*

### **Revisions and Future Information**

- As we resume celebrating the Mass publicly and the coronavirus situation continues to evolve, our practices may change. Please be patient and flexible, and watch our bulletin and website for details.
- If you have questions or concerns, please call the parish office at 763-497-2474.

*An inherent risk of exposure to COVID-19 exists anywhere people are present. COVID-19 is an extremely contagious disease that can lead to severe illness and death. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, senior citizens and people with underlying medical conditions are especially vulnerable to COVID-19. The Church of St. Albert has undertaken precautionary cleaning, disinfecting, and implemented social distancing guidelines to help reduce the risk of exposure. However, the Church of St. Albert cannot guarantee that visitors are 100% safe from exposure to COVID-19. Therefore, the Church of St. Albert recommends that people over 65 or with underlying health conditions not attend Mass at this time and continue to worship online. Attendance at liturgies is at your own risk.*