



CHRIST THE REDEEMER PARISH

FAQ: Mass During COVID-19

Updated September 17, 2020

1. I have not attended Mass since the pandemic began. What will it be like?

The following FAQs should answer some of your questions. We are taking appropriate precautions as advised by the Provincial Health Officer and the Archdiocese of Vancouver in order to make Mass a safe place to be. To have a look at the new set up for Mass in the church, join Fr. Jeff Thompson in [this informative video](#).

2. What is *Every Parishioner, Every Sunday* and why now?

Every Parishioner, Every Sunday is a plan to make it possible again for every parishioner to attend Mass weekly at Christ the Redeemer. During the pandemic we began Mass groups which rotated on a biweekly basis, but that only allowed 400 people to attend Mass every other week. This only allowed half our registered parishioners to come to Mass. When our waitlist grew to 100 people, we knew that something had to change. Now that we have months of experience keeping people safe at Mass and know the school's schedule for the gym, we have come up with a plan which will allow everyone to register for Mass again, beginning the weekend of October 3-4.

3. Does making Mass available to every parishioner, every Sunday mean that the Sunday obligation is reinstated?

The Archbishop's dispensation of the Sunday obligation continues. However, "At the same time, for us Catholics access to the Eucharist and the Church's full sacramental life is of the utmost importance to our spiritual well-being." (Archdiocese of Vancouver; <https://rcav.org/coronavirus/general-guidelines>)

4. Must we continue to physically distance at Mass?

Yes, this is extremely important as COVID-19 is transferred by droplets when someone is breathing or speaking. A distance of two meters or greater (recommended by Provincial Health Officer) significantly reduces the rate of transmission.

5. Is the size of a group still limited to 50?

Yes. Larger crowds increase the risk of transmission, and so the Provincial Health Officer has ordered that no more than 50 people may be present at one gathering.

6. But we are increasing capacity at some Mass times. How is that possible?

By using both the church and the school gym, we can accommodate two groups of 50 at a single Mass time. Maintaining two completely distinct groups complies with the Provincial Health Officer's orders

as mentioned above. The priests are permitted to celebrate up to three Masses each in a single day, so depending on the determined need, we will either celebrate Mass simultaneously in the church and the gym, add Mass times or celebrate Mass in the church with livestream and distribution of the Holy Communion in the gym.

7. Will the standby room remain open for walk-ins?

Beginning the weekend of October 3-4, the McCarthy Room will permanently close as a standby room, as we will have the space to accommodate all parishioners in Mass groups. We will monitor the situation to see if a system to allow (non-registered) walk-ins is needed.

8. I am in a Mass group under the old system. Do I still need to register?

Yes, you must re-register for Mass if you wish to attend on a weekly basis. We want to give all parishioners an equal chance to receive their choice of Mass times, and need to see which times have the most interest. In addition, some of the current Mass times will change and so we will begin afresh.

9. When will I find out which Mass group I'm in?

Everyone who signed up for *Every Parishioner, Every Sunday* will be contacted about their new Mass group/time by the last week of September.

10. What if I don't get the Mass time I want?

Each Mass group consists of 50 individuals (including children/babies, volunteers and celebrants). Under the new plan we are filling Mass times according to the highest level of interest from you, our parishioners. We can add up to two Mass groups per proposed time, which means that if a time is highly popular, we will digitally randomize those who requested it and any others who have been assigned according to their second or third preferences.

11. Can I change my Sunday Mass time?

It is important to stay with your assigned Mass group and time once it has been assigned. Although we can now accommodate every parishioner, every Sunday according to our new Mass schedule, this does not mean we are returning to business as usual, pre-pandemic. This is not a first come, first served plan. The administrative challenges of parishioners switching Mass times on a regular basis exceeds our parish resources. However, if very pressing circumstances require a more permanent switch to a different time, please contact the parish office.

12. There appears to be lots of empty space in the pews. Why aren't empty seats filled at Mass?

Seats are marked and intentionally left empty to facilitate the distancing and occupancy guidelines as mentioned above. If it seems there are lots of empty marked seats during Mass, it's because each

marking is for one person. When two or more of the same household sit together, some marked seats become vacant because that household sat together in a space designated for one person.

13. Can I sit anywhere I want to at Mass?

You may only sit in seats which have been carefully measured to ensure they are 2 metres apart. Please cooperate with the volunteers regarding seating – this helps to ensure your safety and the safety of those around you. Physical distancing, especially indoors, is a critical step towards the prevention of transmission of the virus.

14. Why do we have to check in?

Leaving your name and the contact information for your household facilitates contact tracing as required by the Provincial Health Officer. This means that if someone contracts COVID-19 or had an asymptomatic case of COVID-19 we are able to quickly and effectively contact every other person that was present at that Mass so they can properly isolate and get tested. As contact tracing is required for public gatherings, only those registered (either in-person for weekday Masses, or pre-registered for weekend Masses) can attend Mass.

15. Why is the congregation not singing at Mass?

Singing indoors increases the likelihood of spreading COVID-19. Dr. Bonnie Henry said, “We know that singing, and singing in a group, can be a very dangerous thing for this virus and we’ve seen this in a number of places around the world including recent examples in the States to the south of us where singing groups in churches, even with physical distancing have led to transmission of cases, and singing in other situations as well.” (June 15, 2020)

Instead, one family choir and individual cantors have been leading us from a safe distance to lift our hearts in praise.

16. Do we encourage/require people to wear masks?

We do strongly encourage the use of masks, and have made them available at the check-in desk in case you forget yours. Phase 3 of BC’s Restart Plan still includes physical distancing and encouraging the use of masks where physical distancing is more difficult. Sitting in designated spots which we have determined to be two meters apart, refraining from singing, and washing/sanitizing your hands remain the most effective combination to stay safe while attending Mass at CTR.

17. Why is Communion distributed at the end of Mass?

We’re currently distributing Communion this way to avoid bottlenecks in the aisles and at the doors. This facilitates an orderly and safely distanced exit from the church. Even with small numbers, if everyone leaves at once this encourages bunching which would break the physical distancing guidelines and increase the risk of spreading the virus.

18. Why is a Plexiglass shield set up for Communion?

Distributing and receiving Holy Communion brings the priest and the communicant less than 2 metres apart from each other; the spoken Communion exchange “The Body of Christ” and “Amen” promotes the production of droplets which can spread the virus. The Plexiglass shield protects both the minister and the communicant from contact with such droplets.

19. Why are we asked to leave right away (after weekend and weekday Mass)?

Provincial guidelines recommend limiting the amount of time people spend together in one space to reduce the risk of transmission of the virus. We use a fogger to disinfect the surfaces in the church before and after weekend Masses. It takes approximately 45 minutes to complete disinfection of the entire church so we need this time between Masses before the next group arrives.

20. Why is Mass so short?

Part of Dr Bonnie Henry’s advice regarding the reopening of religious services includes having shorter services in order to reduce the risks of spreading the virus. The Archdiocese has also asked that Masses be kept as brief as possible. The Archbishop has suggested that priests use the shorter options available throughout the Mass and give shortened homilies.

21. Why is Christ the Redeemer taking these matters so seriously?

Because we care so much! Each and every measure we have taken carefully follows the Provincial Health Officer’s directives and Archdiocesan guidelines. Given the demographics of our parish, the Parish Pastoral Council resolved at their meeting of May 9, 2020 that safety must be the paramount concern and that the parish would carefully respect the Provincial Health Officer’s directives. We will continue to operate this way as long as is necessary, while caring pastorally for the sacramental and spiritual needs of our parishioners.

As the ramifications of the pandemic continue to change, we will monitor the situation diligently while following all current directives and guidelines of the Provincial Health Officer and the Archdiocese.