

天主教香港教區

秘書長辦公處

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CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF HONG KONG

CHANCERY OFFICE

16, CAINE ROAD, HONG KONG

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CHANCERY NOTICE

DIOCESAN PASTORAL GUIDELINES ON THE RESUMPTION OF PUBLIC MASSES AND GROUP GATHERINGS

With the gradual stabilising of the pandemic, the Government has relaxed its “Group Gathering” measures by amending the *Prevention and Control of Disease (Requirements and Directions) (Business and Premises) Regulation (Cap. 599F)* and *(Prohibition on Group Gathering) Regulation (Cap. 599G)* with effect from 14 April 2022. Accordingly, religious premises (i.e., churches, chapels and Mass centres) may reopen for the period from 21 April to 4 May 2022, in compliance with anti-pandemic precautions. On the basis of such relaxation, Bishop Stephen CHOW, S.J., has issued related Diocesan Pastoral Guidelines effective for the same period, as follows:

I. RESUMPTION OF PUBLIC MASSES

1. Parish churches (applicable also to “affiliated Mass centres” in what follows) may resume public Masses on weekdays and Sundays. During Mass, the faithful may receive Holy Communion.
2. Churches should be well ventilated and seats cleansed and disinfected regularly, with a disinfected carpet at the church entrance.
3. The congregation should be limited to 50% of the normal capacity of the church. This restriction also applies to wedding ceremonies.
4. All those who enter a church must observe the “Vaccine Pass” regulations laid down by the Government (please refer to the Government website: <https://www.coronavirus.gov.hk/eng/vaccine-pass.html>)

Those who wish to enter a parish church must use the “LeaveHomeSafe” mobile application and present the QR code of their vaccination record or Exemption Certificate.

Parish churches should install the “QR Code Verification Scanner” for verification of whether those who visit them meet the precautionary requirements, and the scanned records should be kept for 31 days. (For the operation of the “QR Code verification scanner”, please watch the demonstration video at the website of Information Service Department of the Government: [https://www.leavehomesafe.gov.hk/_files/videos/Vaccine_Pass-For_Venue_Operators\(Eng\).mp4](https://www.leavehomesafe.gov.hk/_files/videos/Vaccine_Pass-For_Venue_Operators(Eng).mp4)).

For persons whose vaccination record or Exemption Certificate is not presented in the required form or does not contain a QR code and persons under the age of 12 and not accompanied by an adult, the parish church staff are required to collect the declaration / personal information of the aforementioned persons using specified forms (http://www.coronavirus.gov.hk/pdf/vp_dicf.pdf) and keep the records for 31 days.

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5. When entering the parish church compound, the faithful should put on a face mask, take body temperature and cleanse their hands with sanitiser. The use of holy water at the church entrance should be suspended.
6. Ushers should see to it that those inside the church keep adequate social-distancing.
7. The use of liturgical booklets and hymnals should be suspended (projectors may be used instead).
8. Sunday collections should be taken up after Mass, with one or several donation boxes provided.
9. The sign of peace should be expressed by bowing heads, instead of shaking hands.
10. For the time being, Holy Communion should be received only “in the hand”. One’s hands should be sanitised before and after receiving Communion.
11. Once the Mass is concluded, the faithful should leave the parish church compound and avoid socialising.
12. After Mass, the seats in the church should be cleansed and disinfected.
13. The Parish Priest or those delegated by him should see to it that the foregoing Guidelines are duly observed.

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Notes:

- (i) If necessary and feasible, while the Mass is being celebrated in the church, those who are not able to actually take part in the liturgy may be allowed, in an open, spacious area nearby (for example, the parish hall or the open area adjoining the church), to attend the live Mass and then receive Holy Communion, keeping social-distancing.

If arranging for Sunday Masses is not feasible under the current situation, a parish may fix one or more time slots for giving out Holy Communion to those who have attended online Sunday Masses and are properly disposed, by adopting a simplified rite provided by the Diocesan Liturgy Commission.

- (ii) If necessary and feasible, a parish may arrange for one or two more Sunday Masses to meet the spiritual needs of the faithful.
- (iii) Children, the elderly or the disabled and those who accompany them to Mass may sit together, keeping social-distancing.

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(iv) Attending the Sunday Mass is an obligation on the part of the faithful. Nevertheless, in so far as the pandemic is not yet completely contained, Bishop Stephen CHOW, S.J., as discretionary measures, permits the following alternatives to attending the Sunday Mass —

- a. Those who have worries that they might get infected by the pandemic if they come to church to attend the Sunday Mass, may attend it online (and receive spiritual Communion) or perform some acts of devotion, such as reading the Bible, etc.
- b. Granted that the seating in churches is being restricted at present, one can, if necessary, take part in a weekday Mass instead of the Sunday Mass.

The above discretionary measures will be terminated once the pandemic is fully contained and the local situation returns to normal. A related announcement will be made.

II. OTHER GROUP GATHERINGS

Sunday schools, catechism classes, gatherings of lay associations and small-group meetings may be resumed in parish church premises, provided all anti-pandemic precautionary regulations are observed (see above I. 5-6; also, food or drinks should not be provided).

The Diocese has notified Catholic schools which until the recent past had been regularly permitting parishes to use their premises for the above-mentioned religious activities after school hours, that they may again make their premises available. The Diocese has reminded parishes to ensure that their clergy and faithful who use school premises to comply with the anti-pandemic precautionary measures enforced by the Government.

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Given at the Chancery Office,
20 April 2022.



Lawrence Lee

Rev. Lawrence Lee
Chancellor