



The Catholic  
Archdiocese  
of Edmonton

November 23, 2021

Dear Father, Deacon and Parish Staff,

### **COVID-19 Guidelines for Advent and Christmas 2021**

The following guidelines prepared with the current health and safety restrictions in place will assist you in planning for the upcoming Advent and Christmas season.

The general liturgical guidelines issued on September 16, 2021 remain in effect.

Liturgical Guidelines September 16, 2021

[https://caedm.ca/Portals/0/documents/policies/2021\\_09\\_16\\_COVID-19\\_Liturgical\\_Guidelines.pdf](https://caedm.ca/Portals/0/documents/policies/2021_09_16_COVID-19_Liturgical_Guidelines.pdf)

Please note the Archdiocesan Guidelines on Social Gatherings related to facility usage outside of liturgical celebrations. A reminder that social gatherings of any kind are not permitted at this time.

A separate document will be released if and when any provincial restrictions change, or any changes to Archdiocesan protocols.

### **Season of Advent**

Sacrament of Reconciliation – Penitential Celebrations:

- Many parishes have dates in place for penitential celebrations. Parishes may choose to offer the sacrament of Reconciliation more often during Advent.

### **Year of St. Joseph**

- The conclusion for the special Year of St. Joseph is December 8, 2021, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception. Archbishop Smith will celebrate Mass at 5:30 pm at St. Joseph's Basilica. The Archbishop will impart the Apostolic Blessing with the plenary indulgence at the end of Mass in place of the customary blessing. Those who cannot attend the Mass in-person can receive the Apostolic Blessing by participating virtually in the celebration.

## The Encounter of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Elders, knowledge keepers, residential school survivors, and youth with Pope Francis at the Vatican from December 17-20, 2021

- The National Liturgy Office is developing a prayer for individual and parish use, sample intercessions, and other resources to support the Delegation in Rome. The Office for Divine Worship will prepare resources for use.

### Season of Christmas

The following considerations are being offered to assist you in your liturgical planning for the Christmas season.

- *Christmas Eve* and *Christmas Day* fall on Friday and Saturday respectively, this year.
- In keeping with last year's permission, the earliest allowable Christmas Eve Mass is 4:00 pm
  - The general principle is for anticipatory masses not to be celebrated before 4:00 pm. We encourage Pastors to promote Christmas Day masses instead of multiplying Christmas Eve masses. Last year, the Archbishop asked that Pastors who might need to celebrate Christmas Eve masses before 4:00 pm reach out to him which we will continue for Christmas 2021. The Archbishop will reach out individually to those Pastors who have made their needs known to him.
  - The number of Christmas Masses for Christmas Eve and Christmas Day is left to the decision of the Pastor in collaboration with the parish team
  - The use of the parish hall for the following is permitted by the Archdiocese if your municipality allows you to consider the hall as a separate space for gathering. Whatever provincial and/or municipal restriction limits are placed on the occupancy of the church should also be applied to the hall.
    - as overflow for the Mass being celebrated in the church nave.
    - as overflow for the Mass being celebrated in the church nave with the live stream of the Mass.
    - as an acceptable space for the actual celebration of Mass in parishes where there is more than one priest.
    - Please ensure that proper physical distancing and other protocols are followed.
- The *Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph* falls on Sunday, December 26, 2021.
  - **It is recommended that an anticipated Sunday Mass for Holy Family NOT be offered in the evening of Christmas Day (Saturday evening)**
  - The regular Sunday Mass schedule is recommended for Sunday, December 26, 2021.

- The eve of the *Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God*, December 31, falls on a Friday with the Solemnity on Saturday.
  - Your parish may celebrate the usual mass schedule for the Solemnity.
- The Solemnity of the *Epiphany of the Lord* will be on Sunday, January 2, 2022.
  - **An anticipated Sunday Mass for Epiphany is recommended to be offered at the usual Saturday parish evening Mass time.**
  - The regular parish Mass schedule is recommended on Sunday.
- The Christmas season ends with Evening Prayer II of Sunday, January 9, on the *Feast of the Baptism of the Lord*.

### ***Further Considerations***

#### **Consultation and collaboration with staff and volunteers**

- To successfully implement the health and safety guidelines for the Advent and Christmas celebrations, careful planning with the parish council, parish office team, safety coordinators and volunteers is necessary.
- Additional Masses must not be scheduled if the required number of volunteers cannot be assured at these Masses. The concern for the health and safety of the people is a priority.

#### **Crowd control**

- The use of the parish hall requires more effort from the clergy and the volunteers to manage crowds.
- Proper physical distancing is required in all spaces, including halls, walkways and the narthex between cohorts and households.
- People are discouraged from congregating in the church, halls, and hallways before or after Mass.
- Proper signage should be provided to give directions to the people at these Masses as people unfamiliar with your Parish/facility may be attending.
- All spaces must be managed to avoid overcapacity. If possible, parishes are to use different exit doors for the people gathered in the parish hall and in the church nave to avoid these crowds intersecting with each other. As much as possible, guidance should be provided to the people for ingress and egress.
- Sufficient time must be given between Masses to manage parking and foot traffic effectively. Time is also required for any sanitizing protocols that are in place.

- Fire regulations are to be strictly observed as usual.

### **Online registration**

- If your parish chooses to use online registration for Christmas Masses: the plan for online registration and its management requires prudential and creative planning. For example: Opening the online registration too far in advance of Christmas may cause the families to overcommit and, therefore, potentially not show up for the Mass. Families who make more realistic plans closer to Christmas may feel excluded and not welcomed.
- In addition, we need to be vigilant of these planning variables related to the ongoing number of confirmed COVID-19 cases in December.
  - Any change in the provincial restrictions on the maximum allowable number of attendees for worship services may directly affect Christmas Masses and the maximum number of registrations in your online registration system.
  - Any provincial restrictions on family and social gatherings in homes may also directly affect the Christmas celebration plans of families and their Mass attendance.
  - Volunteers will need to be more informed concerning their volunteering commitments under the most up-to-date and current conditions. While volunteers may already be invited to sign-up sooner in the parish, it would be helpful and good practice to require them to confirm their involvement a week before Christmas.