

GUIDELINES FOR CELEBRATING BAPTISMS, WEDDINGS AND FUNERALS

UNDER COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS

For the Province of Ontario

(Version of July 28, 2020)

All preparations of the church as described in our Worshipsafe guidelines for Divine Liturgy are to be observed for other services and Holy Mysteries (Sacraments). This includes screening and keeping a record of attendees, as well sanitizing the church and washrooms before and after use. Numbers allowed in church (30% capacity) and physical distancing rules (2 m.) apply for all liturgical services in our Ontario parishes, including baptisms, weddings and funerals. Care must be taken to monitor provincial and local guidelines for outdoor weddings (at a summer camp chapel, for example) and outdoor funeral services, as allowable numbers are subject to change. Outdoor baptisms on church property are not recommended, as physical distancing becomes more difficult to enforce.

Wearing of masks is to be considered mandatory, unless provincial or municipal exemptions apply.

SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION (BAPTISM, CHRISMATION, EUCHARIST)

1. Ushers should be available to ensure that questionnaires are completed, masks rules are followed and physical distancing is maintained.
2. The clergy must wear masks throughout the service.
3. The celebrant/deacon must sanitize his hands before and after touching anything or anyone.
4. At this time Baptism should be celebrated as a separate rite and not as a substitute for the Liturgy of the Word, followed by the rest of Divine Liturgy.
5. Only one child or adult shall be baptized at a given celebration, unless those being baptized are of the same household.
6. As some parts of the Baptism will involve close physical proximity, the parents and godparents should wear masks throughout the service. Hand sanitizer should be available for their use.
7. In areas of Ontario where municipalities and counties have established stricter guidelines, ALL PERSONS present must wear a mask, unless exemptions apply.
8. Anointing and Chrismation: The priest may touch the child to anoint, having sanitized his hands before and after anointing. Paper towels used to wipe the priest's hands are to be burned.
9. Immersion is permissible under the following conditions:

- a) The baptismal font is sanitized before being filled
- b) The water is fresh and not reused from a previous Baptism
- c) The priest sanitizes his hands before holding the child, as well as afterwards
- d) A mask is worn at all times throughout the service
- e) The baptismal font is to be emptied safely after the service, and properly sanitized.

10. Where there is the custom to give the Eucharist to the newly-baptized, guidelines for Holy Communion during Divine Liturgy apply: distribution is to be done with a sanitized metal spoon not used by others.

11. In areas of Ontario where municipalities and counties have established stricter guidelines for mask use indoors, family photographs without masks should be done outdoors after the service.

THE ORDER OF CROWNING (WEDDING)

In the province of Ontario the number of participants in an indoor wedding ceremony is 30% church capacity, and for outdoor wedding ceremonies the limit is 50 persons (subject to change). Stricter municipal and country rules for the wearing of masks may apply in your area.

1. General guidelines

1.1 Ushers should be available to ensure that questionnaires are completed, masks rules are followed and physical distancing is maintained. They should also control movement before and after the service.

1.2 The clergy must wear masks throughout the service.

1.3 The celebrant/deacon must sanitize his hands before and after touching anything or anyone.

1.4 The couple is required to wear masks when the rite requires the celebrant to be closer than 2 m.

1.5 The wedding party shall be required to wear masks throughout the service, unless the layout of the church allows for 2 m. distancing between members of the wedding party and the attendees in the pews.

1.6 Limits to the size of the wedding party must be determined for each parish, based on physical distancing requirements and the particular layout of the given church. These need to be communicated to the couple well in advance of the wedding day.

1.7 Due to physical distancing requirements, it may be necessary to rope off all pews from the centre aisle accordingly.

1.8 Following the service and departure of attendees, the church must be sanitized as specified in our Worshipsafe guidelines.

2. Wedding rehearsal:

2.1 Only those who are absolutely necessary for the service shall be present (including the ushers who will be assisting). It is desirable that the photographer/videographer be present to ensure that there is clarity regarding placement of cameras and movement.

2.2 All present shall wear a mask throughout the rehearsal.

2.3 The rehearsal should be done without anyone required to touch items that will be used for the wedding itself.

2.4 When hearing the confessions of the couple, as is customary before a wedding, due diligence should be exercised to ensure safety and confidentiality, as described in our Worshipsafe guidelines.

2.5 Areas where people have been present need to be sanitized after the rehearsal.

3. Engagement:

3.1 With the exception of the wedding party, all persons must be seated before the service begins. No one should be admitted into church once the service has started.

3.2 Due to limited space only the maid of honour and best man should remain in the vestibule together with the couple. At this time we do not recommend the use of children as ring-bearers and flower girls.

3.3 With the exception of the maid of honour and best man, all other members of the wedding party should be in place prior to the celebrant exiting the sanctuary. They should enter the church single file.

3.4 The celebrant sanitizes his hands before and after touching the rings.

3.5 Procession into church: 2 m. distancing between celebrant / maid of honour / best man / couple

4. Order of Crowning

4.1 Except when the rite requires, the priest shall preside from behind the tetrapod. Given physical distancing limitations, we recommend that the service be conducted without a deacon.

Exchange of vows.

4.2 PHYSICAL PROXIMITY ALERT: The celebrant and couple shall wear a mask.

4.3 The Gospel Book should be wiped with a sanitizing cloth immediately prior to the exchange of vows, and immediately afterwards as well.

4.4 The celebrant should sanitize his hands before and after placing the epitrahkil on the joined hands of the couple.

Crowning

4.5 PHYSICAL PROXIMITY ALERT: The celebrant and couple shall wear a mask.

4.6 The celebrant should sanitize his hands before and after handling the wreaths or crowns.

4.7 It is recommended that candles not be used at this time. However, if the celebrant chooses to do so, once again he must sanitize his hands before and after handling the candles.

4.8 For the reading of the Epistle and Gospel, the celebrant shall stand on the ambo, and preach from the same location.

Common cup

4.9 The vessel to be used for the common cup must be washed with detergent and water before the service. The only person to handle the common cup prior to the service will be the main celebrant. The cup shall remain covered until the time it is offered to the couple.

4.10 PHYSICAL PROXIMITY ALERT: As the couple will have removed their masks to share in the common cup, particular care must be taken by the celebrant.

4.11 The priest MUST sanitize his hands before and after handling the common cup. The couple put on their masks immediately after sharing the cup and prior to having their hands bound with an embroidered cloth.

Procession around the tetrapod / Wedding icons

4.12 Due to physical distancing requirements, it is recommended that only the celebrant lead the couple in procession around the tetrapod. The couple may be offered the epitrahkil to hold during the procession.

4.13 Providing physical distancing can be maintained, wedding icons may be held by the godparents or designated masters of ceremony, offering the icons to be venerated at each passing. Otherwise, those closest to the tetrapod from the wedding party may fulfill this function. Whoever will be presenting the icons for veneration should hold the wedding icons throughout the service. Wearing a mask is mandatory for those holding the wedding icons. Rather than kissing the icons through a mask, the couple may bow to the icons.

Removal of embroidered cloth / crowns

4.14 The celebrant removes the embroidered cloth and crown, as customary, sanitizing his hands and returning to his place behind the tetrapod for the remainder of the service.

Signing of official documents

4.15 All persons participating must wear masks and sanitize their hands before handling the pen used for the signing. Only one witness at a time shall approach the signing table.

5. Photographer/Videographer

5.1 It is recommended that the photographer/videographer participate in the rehearsal in order to address questions regarding movement.

5.2 A tripod mounted video camera can be placed in a convenient location (in front of the iconostasis, slightly to the side) and once recording has begun it should remain untouched and in place throughout the service. As many of our churches have been streaming services live, it should be possible to make a recording available for the couple.

5.3 Opportunities for still photography will be limited due to physical distancing requirements. These need to be clearly specified during rehearsal.

5.4 The couple may remove their masks for photos in the church as a couple, with all others maintaining 2 m. physical distancing.

5.5 Other wedding photos (wedding party, family and guests) should take place outdoors, in accordance with provincial and municipal guidelines for masking and physical distancing.

FUNERAL

It is important to consult with your funeral director and be informed of the most current provincial and municipal directives in regards to funerals. Parishes must be aware of the specific reopening Stage of their region or municipality.

In the province of Ontario the number of participants in an indoor funeral service is 30% church capacity, provided physical distancing rules can be maintained. Outdoor funeral rites (eg. graveside services) are limited to 100 attendees (subject to change).

For updates from the Bereavement Authority of Ontario see: <https://thebao.ca/covid-19-update-links/>

1. General guidelines for funerals in church

1.1 Ushers should be available to ensure that questionnaires are completed, masks rules are followed and physical distancing is maintained. They should also control movement before and after the service.

1.2 Questionnaires should be prepared and distributed at the funeral home during the evening service (panakhyda). The questionnaire could be collected from the immediate family at the funeral home prior to departure for the church.

1.3 All persons present (clergy and faithful) must wear masks while in church.

1.4 The celebrant must sanitize his hands before and after touching anything or anyone.

1.5 Due to physical distancing requirements, it may be necessary to rope off all pews from the centre aisle accordingly.

1.6 With the exception of the immediate family and pallbearers, all attendees should be seated before the service begins.

1.7 In cases where the deceased is a confirmed or suspected victim of COVID-19, special restrictions may apply.

1.8 Following the service and departure of attendees, the church must be sanitized as specified in our Worshipsafe guidelines.

2. Greeting the body at the church entrance

2.1 The casket should be brought into the vestibule and the pallbearers should be invited to step away. The immediate family remains behind the casket.

2.2 Following the reading of the Gospel, the celebrant leads the procession into the church, with the pallbearers maintaining 2 m. physical distancing from the celebrant. The immediate family should follow, maintaining physical distancing from the pallbearers.

2.3 Having processed into church, the celebrant should stand on the ambo facing the people. Once the immediate family and pallbearers are seated he may go to the usual place at the casket and the service may begin.

2.4. Unless prohibited by local restrictions, the casket may be opened according to custom.

3. Funeral Parastas

3.1 Where possible, the cantor(s) should sing from the choir loft, maintaining proper physical distancing.

3.2 Incensations can be performed, provided physical distancing can be maintained.

3.3 The Gospel is proclaimed and homily delivered from the ambo, as is customary.

Final Farewell (Poslidne Tsiluvannya)

3.4 Only the immediate family may approach the casket for the final farewell. Other attendees shall remain in their pews.

3.5 The celebrant shall hold the hand cross, but may not offer it to be kissed.

3.6 Out of an abundance of caution, we recommend that the celebrant not touch the body during the forgiveness rite or at any other part of the service.

4. Procession out of the church

4.1 With the exception of the celebrant, cantor, immediate family and pallbearers, all other attendees shall remain in their pews.

4.2 The celebrant shall lead the procession.

4.3 The casket should be brought into the vestibule and the pallbearers should be invited to step away. The immediate family remains behind the casket.

4.4 Following the reading of the Gospel, the celebrant leads the casket to the hearse, returning to the church once it is safe to do so, bearing physical distancing requirements in mind.

4.5 Ushers shall assist in directing the attendees to exit the church in an orderly fashion. If the parish has a separate exit designated for use following Sunday worship, that exit should be used here as well. If there is only one entrance/exit ushers should instruct the attendees to wait until the celebrant and cantor have returned to the church before leaving.

5. Funeral Service with Divine Liturgy

5.1 It is not recommended that funeral services be held with a celebration of the Divine Liturgy at this time.

5.2 If Divine Liturgy is held, then all Worshipsafe rules regarding masks, physical distancing, sanitizing, and practices for safe distribution of Holy Communion apply.

6. Interment at the cemetery

6.1 The provincial limit of 100 attendees for an outdoor funeral service applies.

6.2 Enforcing physical distancing is the responsibility of the funeral director.

6.3 The hand cross shall not be offered to the family to kiss.

7. Funeral wake (tryzna)

7.1 At the present time by collective agreement of the Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Ontario, parish halls are to remain closed due to Covid-19 until further notice.

7.2 For this reason no parish hall of the Eparchy of Toronto and Eastern Canada can be used for a funeral reception.