



DIOCESE OF HAMILTON

700 King Street West, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada L8P 1C7

OFFICE OF THE CHANCELLOR

MEMORANDUM

To: All Parishes
From: Monsignor Murray Kroetsch, PH, VG.
Chancellor
Date: February 24, 2022
Re: Updated Covid-19 Protocols

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The Government of Ontario has announced that effective March 1, 2022, the following changes to the Covid-19 protocols will take place, provided that health and health care indicators continue to improve. The changes are as follows:

- Capacity limits are lifted in all indoor public settings;
- Proof of vaccination requirements are lifted, with businesses being allowed to implement them voluntarily;
- Other protective measures, such as mask/face covering requirements will remain in place;
- Public health units can deploy local and regional responses based on local health indicators.

The latest medical opinion we have received from the *Worshipsafe* Committee of the ACBO informs us that Omicron proves to have much higher airborne and aerosol transmission than previous variants related to higher concentrations of virus in the upper airways, and that transmission by fomites (touching inanimate objects) or by food and water does not appear to occur with the Omicron variant.

As a backdrop to the following norms for Parishes in the Diocese of Hamilton, it should be noted, that we need to proceed and re-open cautiously, especially since this pandemic has not concluded. Additional variants of Covid-19 could emerge, which may necessitate further restrictions. Respecting the science, it is our desire to welcome people back to church safely. Some may be hesitant to return and it will be necessary to respect the comfort levels of returning parishioners.

Effective March 1, 2022:

- In accordance with the public health and workplace safety measures, churches may open to full capacity (the same is true for Parish halls and other meeting rooms);
- Attendees should self-screen for any symptoms prior to arrival at Mass;
- Contact lists are not required;
- Masks must be worn by all those attending Mass, two years and older;
- Hand sanitizers should continue to be available to parishioners at church entrances;

- The use of Holy Water is permitted;
- Ushers may be useful in helping parishioners with seating and traffic flow;
- All liturgical ministers (Deacons, Extraordinary Ministers of Communion, Lectors, Servers, Music ministers) may resume – with attention to distancing wherever possible – vaccination is not required;
- As noted in previous correspondence, hymnals may be in place in the pews;
- Congregational singing is permitted;
- Choirs may resume provided that they wear masks when singing;
- Cantors may be unmasked provided they maintain a 3-meter distance from others;
- Children’s Liturgy, if resumed, must include mandatory masking for the children.
- Minimal contact offertory collection is encouraged by ushers extending their baskets or by placement of the collection baskets at the doors. Passing the collection basket from person to person is discouraged.
- The sign of peace by shaking hands is discouraged at this time. It would be appropriate to resume this practice when masks are no longer required and people are more comfortable being in close contact with those outside their household;
- Communion ministers are reminded to sanitize their hands before and after distributing to the faithful;
- The pre-Covid-19 pattern for approaching the minister for Communion may be resumed; parishioners should be reminded to keep a respectful distance from those in front of them;
- Communion in the hand is highly encouraged at this time. Those who wish to receive on the tongue should receive at the end of the Communion procession. Communion from the Chalice is not permitted at this time;

As noted in an earlier memorandum, enhanced cleaning of pews and other surfaces is no longer required. To the extent possible, air circulation should continue to be enhanced. It would be wise to keep posted existing health and hygiene related signage in place, especially as the pandemic is not over, and new variants could emerge.

As previously communicated, work at home measures are no longer in place.

Negative tests for un-vaccinated are no longer required for staff, volunteers or liturgical ministers.