

Archdiocese of Baltimore
Guidelines for Responding to the COVID-19 Virus
June 25, 2020

To limit the amount of information being shared and to make this document as easy to read and helpful as possible, it will be limited to mostly updated/new information. Limited “repeat” information is included in italics. A comprehensive set of guidelines can be found at www.archbalt.org/coronavirus.

General

- A. **Facemasks.** There is growing medical evidence that as communities lift stay at home orders and people are out and about, social distancing, washing of hands and wearing of masks are three of the most effective means by which to limit the spread of the virus. A recent study by a team of researchers led by a Texas A&M University professor has found the following, "Social-distancing and washing our hands must continue, but that's not sufficient enough protection. Wearing a face mask as well as practicing good hand hygiene and social distancing will greatly reduce the chances of anyone contracting the COVID-19 virus." Based upon this growing scientific evidence, we want to emphasize that all those attending indoor services within the Archdiocese of Baltimore **must** wear a facemask and are strongly encouraged to wear a face mask while attending outdoor services. Pastors may want to work on a case-by-case basis with those who cannot wear masks due to medical reasons. Possible solutions are using a face shield that covers the mouth, nose and eyes, or encouraging those who cannot wear either a face mask or face shield to watch the mass via live stream. Pastors may also want to consider discussing options for individuals receiving the Eucharist outside of the daily or weekly services, either at Church or during a home visit. To reinforce the need to continue the use of facemasks, Archbishop Lori recently sent out a Flocknote message in English and Spanish, which can be found [here](#) and [here](#) which you may want to disseminate through your networks as well.
- B. **Home Visits.** In addition to allowing priests and deacons to resume home visits for sick or shut-in parishioners, seminarians and deacon candidates may also participate in home visits as well. We encourage seminarians and candidates to “shadow” a priest or deacon for their first visit in order to ensure they are fully familiar with appropriate safety protocols before visiting parishioners on their own.
- C. **Permission slips/waivers.** As parishes continue to reopen programs and ministries it is extremely important that they secure for all minors involved in any parish-sponsored activities the **attached** waiver/lease/ permission slip prior to allowing them to participate. This is our standard form with an insertion about communicable diseases, assumption of risk and the affirmative duties parents have to affirm they are watching their children’s health. A similar document is **attached** for all adults to sign prior to participating in activities or ministries, including both participants and volunteers. Parishes are asked to execute these documents even if they have other signed documents on file to ensure all of the concerns and assumptions of risk related to COVID-19 are addressed.

Communication

- A. *Repeat information: A page on the archdiocesan website has been established where all pastoral resources will be kept: <https://www.archbalt.org/pastoralresources/>*
- B. *Repeat information: There is one central contact for the Archdiocese for all questions, concerns and reports involving the COVID-19 virus: riskmanagement@archbalt.org. As more information becomes available and as we learn of other questions or concerns more updates will be forthcoming. Updates will also be posted to <https://www.archbalt.org/coronavirus/>, where you can refer parishioners and others for the latest information and news.*