

Guidance for Concelebration at Mass with a Congregation

Introduction

The Government has announced that from 4th July 2020, communal acts of worship will be allowed in our Catholic Churches. This present guidance, issued by the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales for Concelebration at Mass with a Congregation present, assumes that the general guidance published by the Conference, based on Government Guidance on the safe opening of Places of Worship for individual prayer, is in place.¹ This guidance must also be observed in addition to the Guidance for the Celebration of Mass which is not in conflict with the Government Guidance on the Opening of Places of Worship for communal acts of worship.²

This guidance is directed at two different modes of concelebration where the faithful will also be present:

1. Concelebration where the concelebrants live together (forming a single household)
2. Concelebration for events which will draw together a number of priests from different locations.

Concelebration where the Concelebrants live together (forming a single household)

Before the Mass

Concelebrants should be very aware of social distancing in the sacristy. If possible, they should vest separately from each other.

The person preparing the sacred vessels for Mass should wash their hands for 20 seconds or use hand sanitiser, or wear gloves, before touching anything to be used in the Mass.

For each concelebrant, there should be a half-priest's host on a large paten (or patens), covered with a pall, or in a sealed ciborium.

When vested, the concelebrants should enter the sanctuary, venerate the altar and take their seats, without procession, and ensuring that they are socially distant from each other by 2m.

Each concelebrant should have his own copy of the Eucharistic Prayer printed on a sheet which should be disposed of after Mass, or their own copy of *Eucharistic Prayers for Concelebration* (or other text), which should be retained by the priest and not shared. These books should not have been used by others within the preceding 48 hours. If they have, the covers should be wiped with detergent.

During the Mass

The concelebrants should remain in their places during the Liturgy of the Word, except if a concelebrating priest reads the Gospel, in which case he should move directly to and from the ambo at the appropriate time. He should sanitise his hands before and after the reading of the Gospel to prevent any infection risk from page turning.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship-during-the-pandemic/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship-during-the-pandemic>

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship-from-4-july/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship-from-4-july>

At the Preparation of the Gifts

If there is a server, after sanitising his hands, he should place everything needed for the Mass upon the altar and then withdraw. If there is no server, the Principal Celebrant should do this, again sanitising his hands before touching anything. The Principal Celebrant should prepare everything himself, including the hosts for the concelebrants (which should be covered) and his own paten and chalice. Care must be taken that there is no crowding of the altar at this time

The Eucharistic Prayer

The concelebrants should remain standing in their places for the whole of the Eucharistic Prayer. This should be prayed *sotto voce* as per the instruction in the Roman Missal (GIRM n.218). The doxology should not be sung.

The Communion Rite

Concelebrants should not physically exchange the sign of peace.

After the prayer and its response “*Behold the Lamb of God...Lord I am not worthy,*” the Principal Celebrant should hold up the Host to the Congregation and say audibly “The Body of Christ” to which all respond “Amen.” In the same way, he elevates the chalice and says, “The Blood of Christ” and again all respond “Amen.” The Principal Celebrant should receive Holy Communion under both kinds using his own Host and Chalice by taking his Host by intinction into the Precious Blood.

The Principal Celebrant should then withdraw and one by one, the concelebrants, after sanitising their hands, should approach the altar and taking one of the half-priest’s hosts, intinct the Blood of Christ and reverently consume the Sacred Species. They should take great care not to make contact with the Precious Blood in the chalice itself. Once they have done this, they should return to their seat, and the next concelebrant approach the altar and do the same.

If Option 1 is being adopted for the distribution of Holy Communion, and a concelebrant is assisting with the distribution of Holy Communion, after they have received their Holy Communion they should sanitise their hands again and then proceed to distribute Holy Communion.

The Principal Celebrant alone purifies his chalice and the patens/ciborium after the distribution of Holy Communion.

If Option 2 is being adopted for the distribution of Holy Communion, all the concelebrants return to their seats until after the blessing, when those who are assisting with the distribution of Holy Communion should sanitise their hands and proceed to distribute Communion to the faithful.

After the Celebration of Mass

The procession from the sanctuary at the end of the Mass should ensure good social distancing. The sanctuary party should return to the sacristy after Mass. If the clergy wish to greet the people, they should remove their vestments first and not engage in any physical contact with parishioners, who should be encouraged to return home and not remain.

All used purificators and towels should be placed into a receptacle for laundry. All sacred vessels should be washed in hot water with a little neutral soap and dried completely before storing. Concelebrants should retain their own copies of *Eucharistic Prayers for Concelebration* (or other text) and not share them. Paper copies of the Eucharistic Prayer should be disposed of safely.

Concelebration for events which will draw together a number of priests from different locations.

As a general rule at this time, the numbers of priests invited to concelebrate should be kept to a minimum. Priests should be encouraged to sit in Choir Dress (if there are sufficient spaces for this to be practical) or sit in the congregation.

Before the Mass

Concelebrants should be very aware of social distancing in the sacristy. If possible, they should vest separately from each other.

The person preparing the sacred vessels for Mass should wash their hands for 20 seconds or use hand sanitiser, or wear gloves, before touching anything to be used in the Mass.

For each concelebrant, there should be separate chalice, purificator, paten and pall. The paten should have a host on it (either small or half-priest's) and the chalice should be pre-charged with a small amount of wine and a drop of water. These should be placed either on the altar, spaced evenly around its perimeter, whilst leaving sufficient central space for the Principal Celebrant, or on a credence table.

When vested, the concelebrants should enter the sanctuary, venerate the altar and take their seats, without procession, and ensuring that they are socially distant from each other by 2m.

Each concelebrant should have his own copy of the Eucharistic Prayer printed on a sheet which should be disposed of after Mass, or their own copy of *Eucharistic Prayers for Concelebration* (or other text), which should be retained by the priest and not shared. These books should not have been used by others within the preceding 48 hours. If they have, the covers should be wiped with detergent.

During the Mass

The concelebrants should remain in their places during the Liturgy of the Word, except if a concelebrating priest reads the Gospel, in which case he should move directly to and from the ambo at the appropriate time. He should sanitise his hands before and after the reading of the Gospel to prevent any infection risk from page turning.

At the Preparation of the Gifts

If there is a server, after sanitising his hands, he should place everything needed for the Mass upon the altar, including the concelebrants' chalices and patens, and then withdraw. A concelebrant may assist in this, after sanitising his hands appropriately, if there is no server.

The Principal Celebrant should prepare his chalice and paten and pray the appropriate prayers. Care must be taken that there is no crowding of the altar at this time

The Eucharistic Prayer

The concelebrants should remain standing in their places for the whole of the Eucharistic Prayer. This should be prayed *sotto voce* as per the instruction in the Roman Missal (GIRM n.218). The doxology should not be sung.

The Communion Rite

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After the prayer and its response "*Behold the Lamb of God...Lord I am not worthy,*" the Principal Celebrant should hold up the Host to the Congregation and say audibly "The Body of Christ" to which

all respond “Amen.” In the same way, he elevates the chalice and says, “The Blood of Christ” and again all respond “Amen.” The Principal Celebrant should receive Holy Communion under both kinds using his own Host and Chalice.

The Principal Celebrant should then withdraw and one by one, the concelebrants should approach a station at the altar with a chalice and paten, they should consume the Host and the Precious Blood and then return to their seats. Again, there should be no crowding at the altar during this period. The chalice and paten should be left as they were found at the altar after the Sacred Species have been consumed. These Sacred Vessels should be cleansed by the person who consumed from them after Mass has finished. Again, there should be no crowding at the altar whilst this is done.

If Option 1 is being adopted for the distribution of Holy Communion, and a concelebrant is assisting with the distribution of Holy Communion, after they have received their Holy Communion, they should sanitise their hands again and then proceed to distribute Holy Communion.

The Principal Celebrant alone purifies his chalice and the patens/ciborium after the distribution of Holy Communion.

If Option 2 is being adopted for the distribution of Holy Communion, all the concelebrants return to their seats until after the blessing, when those who are assisting with the distribution of Holy Communion should sanitise their hands and proceed to distribute Communion to the faithful.

After the Celebration of Mass

Only the server and the Principal Celebrant should process out after the end of Mass to the Sacristy. The Other concelebrants should, in an orderly manner, each approach the station where they received Holy Communion. They should purify the Sacred Vessels and then return to the sacristy with them, so that they can be washed.

If the clergy wish to greet the people, they should remove their vestments first and not engage in any physical contact with parishioners, who should be encouraged to return home and not remain.

All used purificators and towels should be placed into a receptacle for laundry. All Sacred Vessels should be washed in hot water with a little neutral soap and dried completely before storing. Concelebrants should retain their own copies of *Eucharistic Prayers for Concelebration* (or other text) and not share them. Paper copies of the Eucharistic Prayer should be disposed of safely.

Rev. Canon Christopher Thomas

5th July 2020

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