



Frequently Asked Questions regarding “Deconfinement”

Q1. Can the Parish Hall be rented for groups of 10 or less?

The answer depends on your readiness to safely receive such groups while ensuring the safety of your team and parishioners who may have access to the hall. For instance, you must:

- ensure, before and after the meeting, the cleaning and disinfection of the hall, access to the hall, and access to the washrooms, i.e. surfaces, furniture and all material that can be used during the meeting;
- clearly indicate, using signage, floor decals or tape, the required two-meter distancing from the hall entrance to the main entrance and to the parking (if it is to be used);
- be able to guarantee that the space and dimensions of the hall can safely accommodate the desired number of participants (based on nine square feet per person).

Q2. Can we celebrate Mass outdoors? If yes, how many can attend?

You can offer an outdoor Mass if you can ensure the safety of the participants which includes disinfection and distancing, even if you are in an open area. Thus, you must at least:

- clearly indicate, using signage, floor decals or tape, the required two-meter distancing between individuals, seated or standing;
- clearly indicate any rearranged/restricted areas on-site to avoid proximity between parishioners;
- make mask-wearing mandatory;
- refrain from loud singing by the choir and the sharing of paper documents or songbooks;
- ensure that the chalice, ciborium, paten and all sacred vessels, as well as sacramental linen, are washed thoroughly with soap and water;
- ensure the availability of hand sanitizer to the public;
- follow diocesan protocols for the celebration of Mass, especially for the distribution and receiving of Communion.

Q3. Protocols and guidelines for various parochial and pastoral activities:

You will find detailed answers for these questions in the various documents and protocols prepared for you by the diocese. They can be found on the diocesan website on the [Pastoral Personnel](#) page under the “Covid-19 Deconfinement” tab. Here, you will find a recording of a [webinar](#) recently offered to help guide you through the various phases and steps required to resume pastoral activities and parochial services. For some activities, the steps you will find outlined are mandatory for a safe reopening and restart, while others serve as suggestions for you and your team to consider; these recommendations are open to your discernment, based on



the particular needs of your parish, and your familiarity with the needs of your parishioners, your team and your volunteers.

You will also receive a [check-list](#) to guide you in preparing your place of worship for the resumption and co-ordination of different pastoral and parochial activities, i.e. masses, funerals, marriages, baptisms, catechesis, etc. As soon as you have prepared adequately in setting up the required safety measures, you will be able to progress through the four phases of the “deconfinement” process.

Q4. How do we invite parishioners back to our church after they have worshipped online with other parishes?

Together with your local “deconfinement” committee, try to determine the best way to contact your parishioners, taking into account their needs, communication capacity and the type of media at your disposal. Using the postal service may not be the most efficient way of reconnecting, for instance. It may be better practice to employ communication through a telephone network or by email, especially if you have a list of registered parishioners, and in turn, ask them to reach out to their friends and neighbours etc. We strongly recommend that you prepare to offer services online if you are not already doing so. It is an important, even vital, element for your parish life!

Q5. How will catechesis resume for children in our Faith Formation program?

The details of each “deconfinement” phase are presented in the diocesan protocols, including Faith Education. As of yet, no decision has been reached regarding the sacraments of First Communion and Confirmation. Given that public celebrations of these sacraments will not be permitted during the first two phases of “deconfinement”, you will be informed through diocesan channels as soon as a decision is made.

Q6. Will the faithful be required to wear masks when they attend Mass again?

Even if the government and public health authorities have not made it mandatory to wear masks in public settings, i.e. parishes, missions, oratories, chapels, etc., the diocese recommends making mask-wearing mandatory.

Why use masks? Given that transmission of the virus continues within the population at large, and that neither an effective treatment nor a vaccine is available to date, the diocese of Montreal is making every effort to ensure as much as possible that the reopening of churches will not become a source of a new COVID-19 outbreak. Prevention is key at this point in time until a cure is found. The diocese will also follow the government's recommendation on this matter, making mask-wearing a basic requirement. From a diocesan standpoint, wearing a mask at Mass and during meetings also serves as a sign of Christian charity: it is an act of mercy and a gesture of



love toward our neighbour, seeking to avoid potentially infecting others, especially as a possible asymptomatic carrier of the virus or, while ill but not having yet been diagnosed. Mindful of these risks, we recommend making the simple practice of mask-wearing mandatory across the board, to avoid any potential risk to the faithful and to prevent creating a range of inconsistent standards across the diocese.

Sources for, and types of, masks: parishioners are required to bring their own masks; reusable ones are recommended. We suggest that you also invite parishioners or volunteers who are able to create cloth masks at a reasonable price to consider doing so. This can help facilitate a more convenient in-house supply and help foster a spirit of service and engagement in a social action cause, a key element to the heart of a parish/mission.

Q7. What about our seniors?

It would be great if your committee could develop and circulate a survey to assess the needs and expectations of the seniors in your community; with this information, you can be better placed to identify and meet their needs.

Administering Communion to seniors: The diocese has provided different protocols and guidelines covering various liturgical and sacramental services. There will be no discrimination toward seniors who will have access to, and may be present, in the church; they will receive the Host according to the protocols adopted by your “deconfinement” committee: and in the hand. There are no restrictions concerning the age of priests, volunteers and the faithful. As long as they are not presenting any symptoms of COVID-19, have not been in contact with anyone affected by COVID-19, or recently returned from holidays and are able to participate or to celebrate, they are very welcome.

Q8. If Phase Three includes the resumption of public Masses, will there be a diocesan registration system through which to sign up in order to attend Mass?

No, registration to attend Mass will not be offered at the diocesan level. It will be up to your local “deconfinement” committee to determine at the local level what process to implement in order to facilitate the participation of the faithful at Mass(es). The "[Guide](#)" offers you a few suggestions that you may need to adapt to better suit your parish situation, environment and available resources (human, material and financial), as well as local practices and expectations of your community. Before reopening, we would recommend that you first survey your community on the different areas of parish and liturgical life to assess how best to co-ordinate, organize and provide adequate services.



Q9. Do we have to clean the church if we are not having daily masses?

It is mandatory to clean the church and every meeting room, both before and after each event and activity (pews, ramps, doors, etc.); thus, you will have to determine the time required between different activities that are scheduled to take place in the same space. We continue to recommend using live-streaming platforms or social media to offer Masses online and using cloud platforms to hold virtual meetings, courses, etc., to enable maximum participation.

Q10. When Eucharistic celebrations resume, at what point will Holy Communion be distributed?

The protocols and guidelines offer you different options. A [poster](#) designed by the diocese and safety measures to be taken during the Communion process is available online for your use. Nevertheless, you will have to choose the method that best suits your parish context, environment, etc. and that respects the principles for preventing transmission by observing the protocols of physical distancing, hand-washing, disinfection, mask-wearing, etc.

- The choir and congregational singing: The same conditions required for administering Communion to the faithful will apply to the cantor and choir director. It is important to note that the protocols adopted by the diocese and the “deconfinement” committee recommend that the choir be kept to a minimum number of members, and to refrain from singing loudly during Mass for the duration of the pandemic. There can be one animator, one soloist and one musical instrument (e.g. an organ or a guitar). Their presence will require specific set-up preparations: a microphone for each individual and set at a two-meter distance from each other and the faithful. It is recommended that the animator and soloist use, while singing, a protective visor instead of a mask.
- The priest brings Communion to the faithful: if this arrangement is feasible for the priest, the ministers and the faithful, then feel free to consider this option. It is up to your “deconfinement” committee to determine what will work best in your situation and with the resources you have at your disposal, while ensuring the safety of everybody in the church.
- Communion after the Final Blessing: this is a good option if it is feasible in your parish situation and can be adopted by your committee. In this instance, the priest says the Final Blessing, the congregation replies “Amen”, Communion proceeds immediately following, and in silence, with no verbal exchange while administering/receiving the Host.

Q11. What measures should be applied to our Adoration Chapel, open daily?

The main conditions for reopening the churches will apply here as well, which means that you must ensure disinfection of the premises (inside and out), adequate signage and information visible and available at the entrance, clearly placed decals/tape to mark physical distancing and guidelines governing indoor movement. Most importantly, you should have a volunteer present in the Chapel during opening hours to supervise those who come to visit and pray, to ensure



observance of the required measures and minimize the need for additional disinfection of areas that have already been cordoned off or marked as restricted.

Q12. Can we celebrate Mass outdoors? If yes, how many could attend?

You will be able to celebrate Mass outdoors whenever you are ready to offer a safe and secure environment for all involved, with the only limit on the number of faithful being the seating capacity: this includes distancing, fixed seating, clear directions to be seated, as well as instructions governing attendance at and movement about the site. Please note that you will have to ensure that the volunteers are well-prepared to help ensure instructions are well observed and carried out smoothly during Mass, particularly during Communion. The number of faithful permitted will depend on your capacity to place chairs allowing the two-meter distance between attendees.

Q13. Is there any financial aid to help pay for supplies needed?

No. Each organisation is responsible for procuring all necessary supplies required for the “deconfinement”!

Q14. Do we need to keep track of who is attending, and when and how, in case a transmission case arises?

It would be ideal and best practice to do so. It is up to your committee to choose the strategies and methods that will help organize the reopening of the church. The resumption of pastoral services requires that the principles related to the safety of all members of the parish be applied while taking into consideration the particular context, environment and resources of your organization.

Q15. Is this preparation phase intended for all dioceses in Quebec, or only for Montreal?

The webinars, documents and the diocesan committee are designated to serve the Diocese of Montreal. Nevertheless, the main protocols are consistent with the guidelines of the Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Quebec (AECQ) and respect the government's recommendations.

Q16. Once the doors are open, can we hold Baptisms and Marriages? How soon can we open our parish offices to the public?

Although the government announced that the opening of places of worship would take effect June 22, it is required, within the Diocese of Montreal, that you take the time to make the necessary preparations based on the guidelines and protocols in order to ensure the safety of all those entering the premises for whatever reason e.g. work, volunteering, receiving pastoral and



sacramental services, etc. ***The committee must complete the [online checklist](#) and send in a report*** to the Archdiocese for approval before your parish or mission may reopen your church, your offices, etc. The same guidelines apply to faith formation activities and their respective sacramental celebrations. Sanitary measures have to be in place, with volunteers, participants and parents aware and well-informed of these measures. Guidelines will be given to parishes for First Communion and Confirmation at a later date.

Q17. What is a parish correspondent?

A parish correspondent is a member of your committee who will serve as liaison between your local committee and the diocesan committee, i.e. this contact person will ask questions, send documents, complete the engagement documents and checklists, etc. The intention in having a parish correspondent is to establish seamless collaboration and clarity of communication between your committee and the diocesan committee. It is a good idea to nominate a parish correspondent.

Q18. My question concerns committee members and volunteers: when and where will they receive formation?

It is up to your committee to set up a profile of the needs and services that can be made available according to the reality of your local community. To do so, the diocesan committee recommends that you complete a quick assessment to help identify what and who are needed e.g. volunteers, materials, resources, etc. Then, you will have to offer adequate training to the volunteers; general themes to be addressed are mentioned in the guide and in the checklist. This information is intended to help you plan your services adequately. Of course, you will also need to inform and educate the parishioners before opening the church and planning your services; this information will include a list of pre-existing conditions that prohibit individuals from coming to the church. Finally, considering what has happened in other sectors and geographic locations when general conditions of confinement and risk control in public settings were not properly applied or adhered to, we strongly encourage you to take your time in planning, coordinating and communicating your reopening plan in order to create a safe environment for everyone in your community.

Q19: I would encourage the Diocese to take a serious look at reducing or eliminating the Diocesan contribution for the year of 2020.

We are doing much to help parishes by supporting them with their development and online giving tools, etc., in order to reduce the financial impact of revenue loss. I refer you to our webinar and survey that we have asked all parishes to complete. You can find them here: www.servicesfabriques.org



Q20: What should we do in the event that someone insists on attending Mass or another service when that person is obviously showing signs of illness?

First of all, you must try to check whether the cough is “once-off” or recurrent. If it is recurrent, you must ascertain whether the person is presenting with some other symptoms (fever, fatigue, etc.). If you have taken your time and taken precautions to inform and educate your parishioners about, among others, the reasons that might prevent them from being present at Mass, for example, and you have mentioned clearly the principles upon which such decisions are based, you respectfully remind them of their duty and obligations to the community.

It is also very important that all communities set in place a system for managing a crisis situation e.g. someone who persists, maybe aggressively, in remaining in the church when they are visibly ill and presenting with symptoms that resemble COVID-19. This should involve remaining calm and respectful while explaining why this person needs to be isolated or encouraged to have a test and / or self-isolate before returning to the community at a future date. In a spirit of charity, it is important to help this person understand that the safety and security of everyone is important and that they are welcome back at a later date.

Q21. Can a grieving family be allowed to say a few words at a funeral?

When you are allowed to have funerals in the church and you have the necessary protocols in place, it will be a matter of planning the movements of those people who would like to say a few words of farewell to their beloved. During the preparations for each particular funeral service, those who wish to speak will therefore be briefed accordingly.

Q22. What about ventilation and air conditioning?

Obviously, parishes that have air conditioning require disinfection i.e. basic cleaning. However, the [Institut national de santé publique](#) (INSPQ) mentions on its website that: "from a theoretical point of view, the risk of dispersion of SARS-CoV-2 in the form of droplets or aerosols through a ventilation system cannot be completely ruled out (NASEM, 2020a; Dietz, 2020), although, according to Ezratty and Squinazi (2008), this risk is unlikely"; and in response to the question: "What are the risks of contracting COVID-19 through ventilation systems?" reports that "airborne transmission therefore seems possible, but it does not seem to be associated with a significant proportion of cases, and its importance in the current pandemic remains difficult to assess" (CCNSE, 2020). Is it necessary to apply special measures for the maintenance of ventilation systems during a pandemic? "Several organizations recommend, however, verifying the proper functioning of the system and to adequately ventilate all occupied interior spaces (HCSP, 2020; CCNSE, 2020; ASHRAE, 2020d). In addition, it is generally recommended to: ensure that the ventilation registers are not obstructed by objects or by excessive accumulation of dust; check the proper functioning of the motors and flaps of the mechanical system; ensure the cleanliness of the filters in place".



Finally, the INSPQ informs that "in the light of the information available, it seems plausible that pedestal fans, like other similar devices, could contribute to the dispersion of droplets containing SARS-CoV-2 in the presence of infected persons, whether or not they are symptomatic. The pedestal fan should therefore be used with care.

(<https://www.inspq.qc.ca/en/publications/2992-indoor-environment-covid19>)