

DIOCESE OF MANCHESTER MEMORANDUM

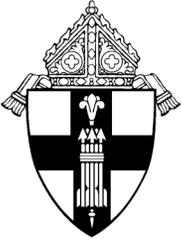
To: Pastors with Cemeteries, Directors of Cemeteries, and Business Managers of Cemeteries
From: David Gabert, Director of Cemetery Operations
Date: October 8, 2020
RE: Update 6 on COVID-19 – Link to all Diocesan Guidance on Protective Measures

I do hope you are all well. I've been traveling around the state and have just about met with all cemetery staff - except for a few. It's been such a pleasure to meet all of the dedicated staff at our cemeteries.

You may have heard that the Diocese has compiled a list of all current COVID-19 guidance issued by the Diocese, along with a few relevant links from other sources, such as from the State of New Hampshire and the CDC. This page provides a link to the guidance document, where applicable, along with a diocesan contact for more information or assistance as well as a link to the cemetery website that contains all of the updates for cemeteries. It can be found here: <https://catholicnh.org/covid19-parish>.

As noted in the documents on the link, an entity offering religious services indoors can admit no more than 50% of the number allowed under its occupancy permit. However, outdoor religious services (i.e. committals/burials) are not covered by this restriction. The only limit on the number of attendees at outdoor committal services is the space needed to maintain the required 6 foot social distancing between people who are not members of the same immediate household.

Each location is to have a staff member monitor compliance with protective measures such as hygiene and social distancing, even for outdoor services. The following pages provide specific guidance for clergy and cemetery staff.



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PREVENTIVE MEASURES FOR CLERGY AND CEMETERY STAFF

Please find the following protective measures that are specific to the other parts of the Catholic Funeral Rite (Vigils/wakes and the Rite of Committal) and other cemetery activities. Please note that the following protective measures listed below **do not** include all of the necessary steps for conducting indoor religious services as found in the *Celebration of Mass with a Congregation* document at <https://catholicnh.org/covid19-parish>. Therefore, please review those documents in their entirety and carry out all applicable provisions.

To Prepare for a Vigil (Wake) or Committal Service:

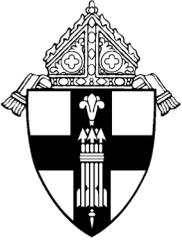
1. Cemetery staff and clergy should continue to wear personal protective equipment (PPE), which includes disposable gloves and masks/face coverings (that cover nose and mouth) prior to greeting individuals and/or touching or moving the casket/coffin;
2. Chairs and other outside items used at committal services should be wiped down and sanitized after every service, especially high-touch areas outdoors (see *Detailed Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting Churches* and *Guidelines for Cleaning and Disinfecting* and at <https://catholicnh.org/covid19-parish>);
3. Hand sanitizers should be provided at entrances and exits of facilities as well as in well-trafficked areas (such as cafeterias, bathrooms and etc.). A cemetery can purchase hand sanitizers by the gallon from the Diocese. Please contact Deb Keane at 663-0155 to put in an order;
4. Prior to arrival at a committal service (indoor or outdoor) people should be instructed to bring their own masks/face coverings and maintain social distancing (i.e. 6 feet between people who are not members of the same immediate household) throughout the service, and;
5. Assign a staff person to assist in compliance with protective policies such as hygiene and social distancing, even for outdoor services.

Instructions to the Sick/Symptomatic:

6. Encourage cemetery staff to stay home when sick, and send home those who report feeling ill or display symptoms. Please read the Sick/Symptomatic section of the *Celebration of Mass with a Congregation* document at <https://catholicnh.org/covid19-parish> for a more descriptive list of symptoms.

Sanitizing/Disinfecting:

7. When the casket/coffin arrives at the cemetery, there should be a designated staff member, with a face covering (defined below) and disposable gloves, to disinfect the exterior of the casket/coffin while giving priority to the handles and sides that can come in contact with employees;
8. Cemetery staff and other individuals (funeral home staff) may assist with removing the casket/coffin after it has been sanitized, and if they are wearing a mask/face covering and protective gloves;
9. Continue disinfecting surfaces, packages and boxes, credit cards, pens, the interior of vehicles, equipment, tools, and etc. See *Detailed Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting Churches* and *Guidelines for Cleaning and Disinfecting* and at <https://catholicnh.org/covid19-parish>, and;
10. Continue to wash hands frequently (for at least 20 seconds or two Hail Mary's), especially after blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing (into the arm), going to the bathroom, before eating or preparing food, and prior to handling mail and packages.



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Mitigation:

11. At the vigil/wake or committal service (indoor or outdoor), clergy should avoid touching the body or casket/coffin. If they have to touch the casket/coffin, they should wear disposable gloves and insist that the casket/coffin is sanitized;
12. At the vigil/wake or committal service (indoors or outdoors), clergy should avoid physical contact and keep the mask/face covering on at all times except when offering the prayers. When offering the prayers without a mask/face covering, clergy should stay between 12 and 15 feet away (if possible) from the nearest person;
13. Cemetery staff should avoid contact with the families and funeral home employees and lower the casket/coffin after families have left the cemetery;
14. Post signs asking all those who enter the cemetery grounds not to engage cemetery staff and keep 6 feet apart from each other;
15. Prohibit cemetery staff from riding in vehicles together – including cemetery trucks and other vehicles;
16. Discourage cemetery staff from using other staff member's phones, desks, offices, and other work tools and equipment;
17. Ensure proper disposal of all protective equipment by carefully removing and placing them in plastic trash bags, and;
18. Remind staff to avoid touching their own face, mouths, nose, and eyes because it is also possible to contract the virus via a surface or object with the virus on it.

All Other:

19. Keep funeral homes, families, and cemetery staff informed of these protective measures – post friendly “reminder” signs in conspicuous locations;
20. Continue to limit public access to cemetery offices and other indoor facilities (unless in compliance with the *Celebration of Mass with a Congregation* document at <https://catholicnh.org/covid19-parish>, and;
21. When showing lots for sale, remember to keep a six-foot distance, wear a mask, and encourage on-line or phone arrangements.

Please know that we are indebted to you for carrying out one of the Church's most essential ministries - to provide a sacred resting place for the faithful who await the Resurrection. It's important that we continue to remember that we are a community of faith, and together we will get through these most unusual times. Let us continue to pray for all those affected by this virus.

As always, don't hesitate to call or e-mail me with any questions or concerns at (603) 663-0191, or by email at dgabert@rcbm.org.