

## **Romanian Orthodox Church's guidelines for priests and faithful during state of alert**



**Considering that, from May 15, 2020, the state of emergency and the applicability of the Military Ordinances that limited essential aspects of the public religious life of the faithful cease, following consultation with the Romanian Government, the Romanian Patriarchate sends the following instructions to the cult units of the Romanian Orthodox Church regarding the access of Orthodox believers to places of worship and cemeteries, and their participation in divine services:**

### **Access of the faithful to the places of worship**

- 1. People who have access to the church, for individual prayer and Confession,** will respect the distance of 2 m, waiting in a single row. The distance of 2 m between two people is to be observed from entering until exiting the church.

2. **It is recommended for seniors, people with significant health problems and persons from high-risk groups to stay at home during divine services.** These persons are asked to go to church before or after the liturgical services are officiated in the open air, to pray individually, confess and partake of the Holy Mysteries inside the place of worship, according to a schedule agreed in advance with the parish priest.
3. **People with COVID-19, people with symptoms of infection, people in quarantine, as well as people who have come in contact with an infected person cannot enter the church or attend any divine service** . They are urged to remain at home, so as not to spread the disease. However, they can watch the services at home via television or the internet (online). Confession and Communion for these persons will be performed at home or in hospital, in compliance with all applicable health regulations.
4. **Access to the place of worship for persons with symptoms of respiratory infection (cough, sneezing, rhinorrhea) is not allowed.**
5. **The order, discipline, hygiene and observance of these measures will be ensured by designated employees or volunteers of the respective church.**
6. Lay believers may also participate in the Divine Liturgy and other divine services during the week, on Sundays and holidays, celebrated in the open air, near the place of worship.
7. At services performed outside places of worship, the distance between believers will be of 2 m in any direction.
8. The use of protective masks is mandatory for all participants in the divine services, except for church ministers who offer prayers, preach or sing at the chant stand.
9. The places of worship will be open daily to the faithful throughout the week so that the ministering priests can answer all the requests of the faithful regarding Confession, Individual Communion and the reading of prayers for different needs. Thus, the crowding of believers at the Saturday and Sunday services will be avoided.
10. The Confession of the faithful and the reading of prayers inside the church will be scheduled in due time, to avoid crowdings. Both the spiritual priest and the confessing believer will use a protective mask and maintain a sanitary physical distance of 2 m. It is recommended, given the small size of most churches and the secrecy of Confession, that only the priest and penitent remain in the church. The remission of sins by the spiritual father will be pronounced from a distance, without touching the penitent.
11. The Holy Sacrament of Baptism and the Holy Sacrament of Marriage will be performed in the place of worship with a maximum of 16 participants (church ministers, recipients of the Sacrament, their parents and godparents). They

will observe a distance of 2 m in the church. The Sacrament of Baptism will not be performed for several children at once. After each Baptism, the baptismal font will be emptied of water and disinfected. At the Sacrament of Marriage, the common cup (“the cup of salvation”) will be offered only to the bride and groom (according to the ordinance of the Holy Marriage Service).

12. The funeral service will be performed in the church (maximum number of 16 people) or the open air, respecting all the sanitary norms, a distance of 2 m and other legal provisions in force.
13. Romanian Orthodox believers who cannot physically participate in Church services can watch or listen to the Divine Liturgy and other divine services officiated at the Patriarchal Cathedral on the Romanian Patriarchate’s Trinitas TV and Radio or other broadcasting stations.
14. Sick believers at home or in hospitals can receive Communion for the sick with strict observance of the sanitary rules, according to the exceptional guidelines for these cases.

### **Use of liturgical space**

1. It is not necessary to touch/hold the handle when entering and exiting the church. Where possible, the front door should be different from the exit door to avoid the intersection of believers.
2. At four-hour intervals, according to the authorities, the place of worship will be well ventilated.
3. Disinfection solutions will be placed at the entrance to the church, and every believer who enters the church will disinfect their hands.
4. During the pandemic, the touching or kissing of holy icons and relics, as well as kissing the hand of the servants of the Holy Altar, will be avoided. Still, reverence for the holy icons and relics will be shown by bowing down, accompanied by the sign of the Holy Cross. Respect for the hierarch and the priest will be shown by a bowing of the head.
5. Until the situation is normalized, no agape meals will be organized in the church or its annexes.
6. There will be only one person wearing a protective mask and gloves at the church gift shop. This person's direct contact with the faithful in the church should be avoided. As a safety precaution (where the place for the gift shop is not an enclosed space), it is recommended to install a plexiglass protective panel with an opening at the bottom.
7. For access to the candle stand room, crowding will be avoided by keeping your distance.

### **Conducting services, measures for celebrating the Divine Liturgy**

1. The number of servants at the Holy Altar must be relatively small (for example, a hierarch, two priests, two deacons and two sextons), to be able to keep a certain distance of 2 m between them.
2. A maximum of three chanters will perform the liturgical chanting at parishes and six chanters at cathedrals. They will keep the sanitary physical distance between them.
3. Liturgical objects used for divine services will be cleaned before and after the services. The pews and floor will also be cleaned.
4. For the Universal Orthodox Church, there are no sacred (sanctified) objects for single-use, but for perpetual use (Chalice, disk, star and spoon), objects that are cleaned before and after every use. In the practice of the Universal Orthodox Church, the use of the common spoon in the Eucharist has not been a source of contamination for any Orthodox believer in the past or the last two months of the pandemic.
5. Therefore, the Romanian Orthodox Church, according to its centuries-old liturgical tradition, cannot accept, even in times of pandemic, the use of the single-use chalice and spoon for Communion of the faithful during the Divine

Liturgy. In this regard, with the approval of the majority of members of the Holy Synod, consulted in writing on May 11, 2020, the manner of general Communion of believers during the Divine Liturgy, during a pandemic, will be decided after June 1, 2020, in consensus with the other Orthodox Churches.

### **Access to cemeteries**

In cemeteries, believers must follow the rules of a distance of 2 m between people, except for family members or those who live together in the same house.

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The social-philanthropic or charitable activity of parishes and monasteries will be adapted to the new social and medical needs, respectively supporting people who cannot travel for food or medicine, but in compliance with all hygiene and protection measures established by the authorities.

The present measures aim to protect our health and the health of those around us. Life and health are gifts from God, but we have to preserve and cultivate them with permanent responsibility.

[Source](#)