

Liturgical Guidelines for “Sensory-Friendly” Masses Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston

- **Prepare the community ahead of time**
 - Make bulletin announcements in the weeks leading up to the Mass, both in the host parish and other local parishes, announcing the date and time. These might also somehow state the intended community for the Mass so that others will know what to expect.
 - Cantor/pulpit announcements should be made prior to the Mass so that all in the congregation are aware of the unique nature of the sensory-friendly Mass.
 - Signs on the church door or in the narthex noting that this Mass will be different than other parish Masses.
- **Training for Ministers of Hospitality**
 - Consider buddying the hospitality ministers with someone from the parish disability ministry
 - Give particular attention to welcoming families and letting them know where they might find certain things:
 - Sensory kits and fidget materials
 - Quieting room
 - Easy restroom access
 - Hospitality ministers should be well-versed in explaining the sensory-friendly Mass, so as to be able to answer questions and inform people that may be unaware what will be happening.
- **Music planning and adaptations**
 - The preference of the Church is always for sung liturgy, so consider musical options – even if they need to be adapted.
 - Consider simple chant pieces, easy and repeated melodies, *a capella* music, or soft instrumentation.
 - If necessary, spoken word may be substituted for parts that are typically sung.
- **Liturgical Adaptations**
 - The preference is that the readings and prayers of the liturgical year be used so as not to separate those attending a sensory-friendly Mass from the rest of the worshipping community. That being said, on occasion it is acceptable for adaptations to be made to the reading selections and Mass propers. If this is desired, please consult the Office of Worship to understand the options available.
 - The liturgy has natural pauses, intended for silent prayer and contemplation by the people. Take full advantage of these opportunities in order to allow the community time for recollection, even if these are not moments of silence!
 - While there is no need to “pause” the liturgy outside of these moments (e.g., if there is noise or movement happening), the liturgy coordinators and presider should discuss the possibility of stopping if the situation warrants in order to allow the community to express itself.
 - There is no reason why the lighting in the church cannot be lowered or turned off. If there is not enough natural light in the liturgical space, consider candles or book lights to allow the ministers to see the texts.
 - The liturgy coordinators should meet with the presider ahead of time to discuss the readings, with an eye toward potential homily topics and guidelines.

- Host parishes should consider the number and availability of low-gluten Hosts for Communion. Ideally there would be 1-2 ministers exclusively distributing low-gluten Hosts, located in a specific spot. Clear instructions should be given to the congregation as to where these ministers will be located or how they can have low-gluten Hosts brought to them during Communion.
 - It may also be advisable that there be a Chalice containing the Precious Blood assigned exclusively for distribution to those who are gluten-intolerant. This would avoid any chance of cross-contamination.
- Instructions for sacristans and Extraordinary Ministers distributing low-gluten Hosts:
 - Anyone who will be handling low-gluten Hosts should wash their hands prior to handling so as to limit cross-contamination.
 - Those who will be distributing the low-gluten Hosts should be indicated to the presider in some way so that he is aware.
 - Low-gluten hosts **MUST** be placed in a clean ciborium, separate from any regular Hosts. Anyone adding to or removing from this ciborium should have washed their hands immediately prior.
 - It is a best-practice that the ciborium used for low-gluten Hosts be one that has a cover so as to be able to reserve a separate low-gluten ciborium in the Tabernacle.
 - Ministers distributing low-gluten Hosts should either receive the Body of Christ directly on the tongue, or should also receive a low-gluten Host.
 - At the conclusion of distribution the EMHC with low-gluten Hosts should return the ciborium with remaining Hosts to the priest. He should cover the ciborium and repose it in the Tabernacle separately. **DO NOT** condense the low-gluten hosts into the Tabernacle with regular Hosts.