Policy for Disruptions During the Liturgy

A. Scope and Purpose

The Archdiocese of Vancouver wants to ensure a safe space for all the faithful who come to pray and worship at their parish. Parishes, therefore, need to be prepared to deal with an emergency or disruption that may take place during the Liturgy. The following guidelines provide for what should happen in the case of certain emergencies or disruptions.

B. Application

This policy establishes that the ushers assigned to serve at parish Masses are entrusted with the safety of those attending Mass. The number of ushers required will depend on the size of the parish's congregation. It is recommended that a minimum of two ushers attend each Mass or other service. The ushers, having received instructions and training, must be prepared to act as first responders. They are to be trained in automated external defibrillators (AED), basic first aid, evacuation procedures, and this policy.

C. Medical Emergency

If a person experiences a medical emergency, keep in mind these guiding principles:

1. Unless there is a high risk of further injury or death DO NOT MOVE THE PERSON.
2. Keep calm and do not leave the person unattended.
3. Inquire whether a health-care worker is available.
4. Initiate first aid.
5. Call 9-1-1 if required. Provide exact address and nature of medical emergency if known. In many cases, the Mass attendee may have come with a family member or friend who may be helpful in providing this needed information.
6. Assign a person to wait outside the church to direct the Emergency Medical Services to the needed area.

D. Fire

When fire or smoke is discovered, the fire alarm is to be pulled immediately. The ushers should then proceed to safely evacuate the church. The priest should endeavour to safely secure the hosts and chalice in the tabernacle and proceed to assist the ushers with the evacuation process and/or immediately evacuate himself depending on the situation.

Evacuation Process

Each parish must identify an emergency route and a muster point. It is expected that the ushers are well versed in the emergency evacuation plan and are aware of the location of all exits, alarm pulling stations, and fire extinguishers.

1. Remain calm to keep order.
2. Identify someone to call 9-1-1.
3. Evacuate the church by the safest and smoke-free fire exits.
4. Assist (or assign someone to assist) the elderly and person(s) with disabilities safely to the muster point.
5. Have someone waiting outside for the fire department to direct them to the fire, if necessary.

E. Earthquake

In the event of an earthquake, the following protocols apply:

1. Drop, cover and hold on. Wait in place until after the shaking has stopped.
2. Stay away from objects that may fall and from glass that may shatter.
3. Expect that the building alarm signals may activate (false alarms).
4. Assess the situation for immediate safety concerns such as fire, smoke or gas leak.

After the shaking has stopped, the ushers are to:

- Expect aftershocks which can occur minutes after the earthquake.
- Look around to make sure it is safe to move and then direct people to exit the building.
- Depending on the parish's location, move people to high ground and away from water, as an earthquake in Vancouver may be accompanied by a tsunami.
- Check each other for injuries, and help injured or trapped persons. Give first aid where appropriate.
- Call for help. Be careful around broken glass and debris.
- Look for fallen power lines. Be cautious, and assume fallen power lines are still energized. Stay a minimum of 10 metres (30 feet) away to prevent injury.
- Look out for fire. It is the most common hazard after an earthquake. Look for and extinguish small fires. Be aware that the electricity supply could be cut, and sprinklers and alarms in buildings may go off even if there is no fire.
- Turn off natural gas only if there is an odour of rotten eggs and the building has been evacuated.

- Not re-enter buildings, including parish halls or rectories, until deemed safe by proper authorities.
- Keep informed:
  - Dial 9-1-1 only if a life is at stake – otherwise do not use phones to help prevent telephone network overload.
  - Tune in to local radio or television stations for important information updates.
  - Sign-up for Twitter alerts.

F. Media Presence:

The Archdiocesan *Policy on Media Communications* addresses how to manage inquiries or media presence. All media inquiries must be directed to media@rcav.org.

G. Loud Disruptions and Protesters

Loud Disruption

In the event of a loud disruption, such as an argument, the designated usher should approach the individuals calmly and quietly and ask them to exit the church.

If the altercation continues, and especially if it escalates, step back and call 9-1-1.

Protesters

In the case of a protest, pay as little attention as possible. To avoid a counter-protest, do not respond to the protesters.

If the parish has been informed of an impending protest,

1. Notify the Archbishop's Office (rcavbishop@rcav.org) and the Communications Office (media@rcav.org);
2. Notify the police. They are trained for these situations and can provide advice on how to proceed. Early notification will give the police time to prepare if they decide that they need to be onsite;
3. Consider hiring additional security.

Approved: **Feast of Saint Lawrence**
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+ J. Michael Miller CSB

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Archbishop of Vancouver

The following policy is hereby **SUPERSEDED:**
Protocol in the Event of Disruption of Liturgy, issued May 13, 2012.

Appendix: Clergy: Actions To Be Taken

If the priest cannot continue the Liturgy, the following procedures are to be observed as outlined in the Code of Canon Law, c. 927:

Before the Consecration

Should a priest have to interrupt the Mass due to illness or another grave reason before the Consecration, the second priest at the parish, if available, should be asked to complete the Mass.

If there is no priest to continue the celebration and no other Mass is reasonably available, then a deacon, instituted acolyte or authorized Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion could distribute Communion from the tabernacle using the Rite of Distributing Holy Communion Outside of Mass.

After either Species has been consecrated

Should a priest have to interrupt the Mass due to illness or another grave reason after he has consecrated either or both Species — and is unlikely to be able to recover sufficiently within an hour — there is a grave obligation to have the celebration continued by another priest.

The following actions should be taken:

1. A second priest, if available, must be found to complete the Mass.
2. If no priest is immediately available, the hosts and the chalice should be placed in the tabernacle until a priest can come to finish the Mass.
3. If not-yet-consecrated wine were to spoil, or be certain to spoil, before a priest can come to consecrate it, then it may be poured down the sacrarium (by a priest, deacon, instituted acolyte, or authorized person) and replaced with new matter (wine and water) when the priest arrives.

After the priest has received Communion

If the interruption occurs after the priest's Communion, then a deacon, instituted acolyte or authorized Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion can administer the consecrated Species to the faithful using the Rite of Distributing Holy Communion Outside of Mass.