



Infection Control Guidance for ACTS Retreats

This document provides voluntary guidance intended to assist Parishes in deciding whether and under what conditions ACTS Retreats may be held in view of the COVID-19 and coronavirus outbreaks. The information has been prepared based on publicly available sources, including federal agencies and governmental entities, and ACTS Missions (ACTSM) gives no assurances regarding the accuracy or effectiveness of the guidance herein. Each Parish will independently evaluate and determine whether to use the recommendations provided herein.

All mandatory Archdiocese/Diocese, Parish, federal, state, local, and administrative orders, laws, rules, and ordinances concerning COVID-19 or coronavirus should be followed at all times. ACTS retreats should not be held if prohibited under any mandatory restrictions. To the extent the guidance herein conflicts with mandatory restrictions, the mandatory restrictions should be followed.

If ACTS retreats may occur consistent with all applicable mandatory restrictions, the first and foremost goal should be the health and well-being of the retreat participants. To that end, ACTS Missions provides the following suggestions for conducting ACTS retreats based on CDC guidelines.

General considerations for Parishes to keep participants safe on ACTS Retreats

1. Limit total number of participants to less than 50 (ideally 20 team and 20 retreatants).
2. Team Formation can be done in Virtual format or combination of Virtual and In Person. The considerations for In Person Formation are as follows:
 - Screening questionnaire for team before start of formation, including COVID-19 history; discourage anyone at higher risk for severe illness from participating (list risk factors on Team invitation letter)
 - Before each team meeting, temperature check and screening questions for symptoms; hand hygiene practiced before entering meeting room
 - Cloth Face coverings required at all meetings as per current masking recommendations
 - No food served at meeting unless wrapped snacks; individual packaged box meals, bottled or canned drinks only; avoid buffet or family style meals
 - Social distancing guidelines to be followed in large, well-ventilated areas (for all meetings, practices, mini-retreat)
 - Consider recorded music or small music ministry (2 people) to allow for appropriate social distancing & reduce risk of transmission
 - Have adequate hygiene supplies, such as soap, tissues, hand sanitizer (with at least 60 percent alcohol), sanitizing wipes
 - Limit the sharing of touched objects, such as worship aids, prayer books, hymnals, rosaries, or other items passed or shared
 - Commissioning Mass per parish guidelines for liturgical worship



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3. General Retreat Guidelines:

- Include screening questions regarding COVID-19 history on retreat registration form; discourage anyone at higher risk for severe illness from attending (list risk factors on the form). Follow up with retreatant prior to retreat to verify information and address concerns; follow up with retreatant day prior to retreat to verify current health status, including any close contact with a person with COVID-19. If any concerns identified, respectfully ask them to not attend the retreat for the safety of others.
- At send-off on Thursday evening, screen retreatants per current recommendations, i.e. temperature checks and COVID screening questions including recent contact information; issue cloth masks.
- If retreatants are driven to the retreat center, limit 2 retreatants per car, drivers to be screened and wearing masks, cars sanitized.
- If retreatants are taken by bus to the retreat center, 1 retreatant per row, every other row spacing, bus sanitized.
- Screen team members on Thursday upon arrival at Retreat Center for temperature and COVID health screening questions.
- Follow current social distancing and face covering guidelines during retreat setup and entire retreat weekend (team and retreatants).
- Greeting at retreat center should be touch-free – make it fun with signs of encouragement, hand signals, blow kisses, etc.
- Temperature checks each morning before beginning the day's activities.
- Consider alternating activities between different inside and outside areas/rooms to minimize time spent in one area.
- Develop contingency plan if Retreatant or Team Member falls ill on Retreat to quarantine them until transportation arranged with family for medical assistance.

4. Retreat Center considerations (Retreat Leadership Team to verify with Center that guidelines can be met)

- One retreatant per bedroom (no roommates unless immediate family) with private bathroom.
- Each bedroom will be supplied with disinfectant wipes and hand sanitizer.
- Minimize number of entries into retreatant rooms – i.e. Angels and Stewards should have method for leaving needed items without entering rooms.
- Every common area will have disinfectant wipes and hand sanitizer available for use.
- Dining room will allow for social distancing at mealtimes; may have to consider staggered mealtimes or if weather allows, some outside dining area options.
- Meal planning: Disposable plates/utensils should be considered; avoid buffet or family-style meals; all snacks must be wrapped or pre-packaged.
- Cleaning, disinfection, and ventilation recommendations to be followed by Retreat Center for all common areas (reference CDC current guidance).



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5. Presentation Room considerations
 - Current social distancing and face covering guidelines to be followed at tables.
 - Table leaders responsible for wiping down (disinfecting) tables after each session.
 - Limit the sharing of touched objects or other items passed.
 - Microphones that are shared should be sanitized between speakers.
6. Chapel activities
 - Designated seating at Mass for retreatants and team to ensure social distancing – mark places with cloth or signs, alternating pews.
 - Follow parish guidelines for celebrating liturgy.
7. Stations of the Cross Service
 - Current social distancing and face covering guidelines to be followed.
 - Limit the sharing of touched objects or other items passed.
 - Consider service to be held outdoors if weather permits or Retreat Center has available.
8. Reconciliation Service
 - Current social distancing and face covering guidelines to be followed.
 - Distance the priest and retreatant from other participants to allow for them to speak loudly enough to minimize close interaction and yet ensure confidentiality. Consider having Reconciliation outside if weather allows.
 - Limit the sharing of touched objects or other items passed.
9. Footwashing Service
 - Current social distancing and face covering guidelines to be followed.
 - Refer to Chapter 7: Services in the *ACTS Retreat Manual, c.2019* on how to conduct the service.
10. Candlelight Service– options to be evaluated and decided by Parish Pastor and Core due to risks and difficulty in screening large groups of people attending. Possible options are as follows:
 - No candlelight service.
 - If retreat center has A/V capability, hold a live-streamed candlelight service from the parish to the retreat center.
 - A special prayer service for family and friends of the retreatants and team in place of Candlelight.
 - If time of year and Retreat Center grounds allow, consider outdoor event with social distanced designated spaces for family; family and retreatants would be distanced, without interaction. Participation limited to retreatant families.
11. Agape Service
 - Current social distancing and face covering guidelines to be followed.
 - Food and drink served should be individually packaged and wrapped to minimize the sharing of touched objects.
 - Microphones that are shared should be sanitized between speakers.



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12. Follow social distancing guidelines for transportation back to parish on Sunday morning (refer to Thursday evening transportation guidance).
13. Sunday Return Mass – follow guidelines per parish pastor and current social distancing guidelines established by the Archdiocese/Diocese
14. Pentecost Event (Retreat Reunion) – follow same best practices as during Team Formation.

References

CDC Guidance for Leaders of Community and Faith-Based Organizations to Plan, Prepare, and Respond to COVID-19 – Interim guidelines 3/21/20; updated Interim Guidance for Communities of Faith 5/23/20
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/faith-based.html>

CDC Guidance for COVID-19, People Who are at Higher Risk for Severe Illness
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-at-higher-risk.html>

ACTS Retreat Manual, (c)2019, published by ACTS Missions.
<https://www.actsstore.org/acts-english-directors-manual.html>

ACTSM Communication May 2020: Staying Connected during Quarantine and Social Distancing
[Staying Connected \(in English\)](#)

Each parish shall refer to their specific Diocesan guidance for Parish activities such as retreats.

Disclaimer

ACTS Retreats are group events and necessarily carry certain inherent risks related to COVID-19 and coronavirus transmission that cannot be eliminated regardless of the care taken to avoid such risks. Moreover, the prevalence and transmission of COVID-19 and coronavirus in each Diocese and Parish significantly varies and rapidly changes on a day-to-day basis. **Therefore, each Parish has the sole and exclusive responsibility for determining whether and how to conduct ACTS Retreats during the time of any COVID-19 and coronavirus transmissions or outbreaks.** ACTS Missions shall not be liable or responsible for the guidance herein or for any COVID-19 or coronavirus transmissions or infections arising from or relating to ACTS Retreats. The recommendations herein are voluntary, and each Parish assumes all risks of personal injury, sickness, and death that may arise from using this guidance or conducting ACTS Retreats.

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