



Diocese of Helena

Date: 20 January 2021
Re: COVID-19 Directives, Upcoming Liturgies, Vaccination

From: *+ Austin A. Veit*

COVID-19 Directives – Reminder:

- The obligation to attend Sunday Mass continues to be dispensed.
- Mask use continues to be required, please do not ask people to leave the church who aren't wearing one, rather offer them a mask.
- Social distancing of 6 feet is to be maintained and managed.
- The invitation to the Sign of Peace continues to be omitted, and no sign of peace offered.
- There is not to be a procession of the offertory gifts of bread and wine.
- Distribution of Holy Communion is to be offered in the hand, no one is to be denied Holy Communion on the tongue.
- Distribution of the Precious Blood continues to remain suspended.
- Communion to the Homebound remains suspended due to the health risks to some of our most vulnerable parishioners. A priest assigned to a parish may commission a person to take communion to homebound family members.
- No social gathering is permitted before or after Mass, e.g., coffee and donuts.
- Ensure proper cleaning of frequently touched surfaces in the church, following CDC guidelines, provide hand sanitizer at the church entrance.
- Holy water fonts are not to be used and should remain drained.
- Because of the difficulty in sanitizing hymnals and missalettes, disposable liturgical aids are recommended.
- Overnight retreats are not permitted.

Directives for Upcoming Liturgies:

- **Optional Memorial of St. Blaise Day:** February 3, 2021 – **Blessing of Throats:** The Book of Blessings allows for the Blessing of Throats to take the place of the final blessing during Mass. The blessing is given to all assembled by extending hands, without the crossed candles, over the people while saying the prayer of blessing.
- **Ash Wednesday:** February 17, 2021. From the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, dated January 12, 2021:
 - The priest addresses all those present and only once says the formula as it appears in the Roman Missal, applying it to all in general: 'Repent, and believe in the Gospel,' or 'Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return,'.

- The priest then cleanses his hands, puts on a face mask and distributes the ashes to those who come to him or, if appropriate, he goes to those who are standing in their places.
- The Priest takes the ashes and sprinkles them on the head of each one without saying anything.
- **Rite of Election** – In accord with the provisions of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, I, Bishop Vetter, delegate priests assigned to a parish to preside at the Rite of Election on the First Sunday of Lent, February 21, 2021 (see Rite, Part I, Second Step). Likewise, I delegate priests assigned to a parish to preside at the Rite of Election of Catechumens and of the Call to Continuing Conversion of Candidates Who are Preparing for Confirmation and/or Eucharist or Reception into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church (see Rite, Appendix I, #1). Note that when the Rite of Election is not celebrated in the parish, the Rite of Calling Candidates to Continuing Conversion is celebrated at the beginning of Lent by a priest assigned to the parish (see Rite, Part II, 4c).

The names of the Elect can be sent into the Cathedral to be inscribed in the Diocesan Book of Elect.

- **Confirmation** – In addition to what is granted in the diocesan priest Faculties, I am granting the faculty to priests assigned to a parish to Confirm a person fifteen years of age or older who has been Baptized as a Catholic but not yet Confirmed, through June 30, 2021. In order to Confirm a person younger than fifteen, the priest must request in writing the Faculty to do so (giving the name of the person, date proposed for Confirmation, and reason for the request); if approved, the Bishop will grant in writing the appropriate Faculty. To administer the Sacred Chrism, use a single use QTip or cotton ball.
- **Chrism Mass:** The blessing of oils and the consecration of the Sacred Chrism will be celebrated by the Bishop, similar to last year. Oils will be delivered to each Deanery.
- **Palm Sunday:** March 27-28, 2021 — Palms are to be give out by an usher wearing gloves and a mask. They are to be blessed at the beginning of Mass using the Simple Entrance from the *Roman Missal*.
- **Weddings** – Ensure all COVID-19 directives (i.e. masks, social distancing, sanitizing) are in place.
- **Further directives will be coming for Holy Week and Easter.**

COVID-19 Vaccine

- Here is the link to the USCCB statement on Moral Considerations Regarding the New COVID-19 Vaccines: <https://www.usccb.org/resources/moral-considerations-regarding-new-covid-19-vaccines-1>, which concludes that “inoculation with the new COVID-19 vaccines in these circumstances can be morally justified.”
- Please familiarize yourself with this statement and share it with your parishioners.
- I will be getting vaccinated and I encourage you to do so as well.