



*Worship and Sacraments in
the Time of Public Health Concern
Directives and Guidelines for the
Diocese of Youngstown ~ March 2020*

Per the decision to suspend public celebrations of all Masses/liturgies, below are specific guidelines/directives on how to best proceed with celebrating the sacraments, remaining pastorally sensitive to the faithful, and diocesan plans for upcoming Holy Week Services. Please note the separate sections for each sacrament, as well as specific and important guidance for administering the sacraments to anyone who is a confirmed COVID-19 patient.

➤ **Church Building ~ Open for Personal Prayer and Devotion**

Church buildings can remain open for private prayer of the faithful and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament (either reserved in the tabernacle or exposed) depending on the physical arrangement of the space. The days and time should be limited and are best determined by each pastor taking into consideration constraints on staffing and the need to perform routine maintenance. The number of people present should be limited to 10 with physical distancing. In addition seating should be confined to a specific area to prevent contamination of the entire nave area. Hymnals and other worship aids should also be removed, or if used, disinfected regularly.

➤ **Celebration of the Eucharist**

Priests are highly encouraged to offer Mass daily, if possible, but in a non-public way. Consider the times the church is open for private prayer of the faithful, and celebrate the Eucharist at other times, or in a private area without members of the faithful. Canon 904 states: *Remembering always that in the mystery of the Eucharistic sacrifice the work of redemption is exercised continually, priests are to celebrate frequently; indeed, daily celebration is recommended earnestly since, even if the faithful cannot be present, it is the act of Christ and the Church in which priests fulfill their principal function.* Priests should not binate or trinate solely for the purpose of fulfilling scheduled Mass intentions; they can be rescheduled for the future.

During this time Bishop Murry gives permission for the Masses for Various Needs and Occasions, (#45 For the Sick and #48 In Any Need) to be used on Lenten weekdays.

➤ **Spiritual Communion via Live-Streamed or Televised Mass**

Viewing a live-streamed, online, or televised Mass is an opportunity for the faithful to remain connected to the Sacrifice of the Mass during this difficult time. Please share with parishioners through your parish social media platforms the times which daily and Sunday Mass can be viewed. A complete schedule can be found on the Diocesan website: www.doy.org under the MEDIA tab. Another source includes: www.watchtheMass.com from the CatholicTV Network offering daily Mass in English Sunday through Friday and in Spanish every Sunday.

Below are recommendations that can be shared with parishioners on how to make a 'spiritual communion' when unable to participate in Mass. These can be adapted based upon personal and family needs:

- Gather with others in your household and begin a time of prayer with the sign of the cross.
- Take time to read and reflect upon the readings from Sunday Mass. Scripture readings can be found at www.usccb.org. Additionally, a televised schedule of Mass is available at www.doy.org under Media tab.
- Share prayer intentions quietly or aloud.
- Pray the Lord's Prayer.
- Offer a prayer for healing, strength, or forgiveness or any prayer available during the coronavirus pandemic:
<http://www.usccb.org/about/communications/usccb-president-reflection-and-prayer-during-coronavirus.cfm>
- Close with the sign of the cross.

➤ **Baptism**

All parishes in the Diocese of Youngstown are asked to observe some temporary practical norms concerning the Sacrament of Baptism. At this time, while Baptisms are still possible based solely on pastoral urgency, it is highly recommended that they be postponed, unless it is a dire circumstance, to insure the safety of all involved. If a baptism is held there are to be no more than 10 people present. Use only fresh water that has been blessed for the Baptism and immediately drain it to the ground after. Family members in vulnerable populations should be encouraged to stay home.

➤ **Reconciliation/Confession**

Especially during Lent, it is important that the faithful experience God's mercy in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Every consideration should be given to offering the Sacrament of Reconciliation to individuals. However, to help minimize the risk of

exposure, it is recommended that the following adaptations be employed should anyone be concerned about possible transmission of the Coronavirus/COVID-19:

- Temporarily move out of the confessional if it is a tight space and provide the Sacrament of Reconciliation in a larger room where a confidential conversation can still be held.
- If possible, use a screen to block the air flow between the priest and penitent. The penitent should always have the option of confessing anonymously.
- Attempt to keep sufficient space between priest and penitent.
- Use a chair without armrests or cleanse the armrests with sanitizer between each person. Consider providing the sacrament in such a way that the penitent remains standing, ensuring proper distance, and to minimize surfaces being touched.
- If confessions are heard from multiple penitents, ensure disinfecting wipes are available and used between each person. Penitents waiting should practice safe distancing and number no more than 10.
- The Sacrament of Reconciliation may NOT be celebrated virtually (i.e. video chat, facetime, via phone etc.) and General Absolution is not permitted.

➤ **Confirmation**

All Confirmation ceremonies at least through April 12, 2020 are postponed. Bishop Murry hereby grants delegation to pastors to confirm their candidates scheduled for Confirmation during this period at a time after it has been determined safe and is convenient to the parish. Confirmation ceremonies scheduled after April 12, 2020 will be dealt with at a later date.

➤ **Weddings**

If possible, weddings should be rescheduled for the time being. Any wedding that is held must be done with no more than 10 people present and who do not exhibit any symptoms. All precautions and sanitizing must be observed.

➤ **Funerals**

Funeral Masses with a very limited number present are permitted. Our response and action should be as pastoral as possible. Encourage and work with local funeral directors to abide by these norms. Public viewing/calling hours in Church vestibules,

chapels or other spaces are to be avoided. Memorial Masses can be scheduled at a later date.

➤ **Anointing of the Sick ~ Holy Communion to the Sick and Homebound**

Ministering the Sacraments to non-COVID-19 patient

If the visit is in a hospital environment, follow the hospital directives regarding personal care and cautionary measures.

Holy Communion to the Sick and Homebound

If the visit is in a home, follow these guidelines:

- Wash hands or use a hand sanitizer once you enter the home.
- Avoid any physical contact with the person or family during the visit.
- Use a hand sanitizer again before distributing Holy Communion.
- If the communicant usually receives Holy Communion on the tongue, strongly encourage him/her for your safety as well as his/hers, to receive Holy Communion in the hand.
- Wash or sanitize your hands after the visit.
- Maintain physical distance (six feet) with everyone in the room, except the patient.
- Do not offer comfort with any physical contact.

Anointing of the Sick

If the sacrament is celebrated in a health care facility, follow the protocols and protective guidelines of that facility. If the sacrament is celebrated at a home, follow the guidelines stated above and the following:

- Maintain physical distance with everyone in the room so as to offer comfort without making physical contact.
- Wash or sanitize your hands once you enter the room.
- The anointing may be done with a cotton-tipped swab or a cotton ball which is to be burned or buried after use.
- Sanitize your hands after the visit.

Ministering the Sacraments to confirmed COVID-19 patient

Priests in the high-risk group (i.e., over the age of 60) or those with comorbidity; i.e., when two or more chronic illnesses are present (e.g. hypertension, diabetes, Crohn's disease, any form of cancer, rheumatoid arthritis, asthma, COPD, heart disease) should consider asking for the help of other priests when possible.

These recommendations are in place following the healthcare guidelines that indicate younger, healthier individuals are at a much-diminished risk of contracting a serious case of COVID-19.

Holy Communion to the Sick and Homebound

- ❖ *If this is performed in a hospital or healthcare facility, the guidelines for protective measures, including garments, prevail.*
- ❖ *If this is not in a hospital or healthcare facility: If available, latex gloves should be worn unless the patient or priest/deacon has an allergic sensitivity to latex. Additionally, if available, protective eyewear (a pair of glasses will suffice) should be worn.*
- ❖ *In all cases, follow the guidelines below:*
 - Wash hands or use a hand sanitizer once you enter the home.
 - Avoid any physical contact with the person or family during the visit.
 - Use a hand sanitizer again before distributing Holy Communion.
 - If the communicant usually receives Holy Communion on the tongue, strongly encourage him/her, for your safety as well as his/hers to receive Holy Communion in the hand.
 - If the priest uses his gloved hand, the glove is to be burned or buried after the visit.
 - Maintain social distance (six feet) with everyone in the room, except the patient.
 - Do not offer comfort with any physical contact.

Anointing of the Sick

- ❖ *If this is performed in a hospital or healthcare facility, the guidelines for protective measures, including garments, prevail.*
- ❖ *If this is not in a hospital or healthcare facility: If available, latex gloves should be worn unless the patient or priest has an allergic sensitivity to latex. Additionally, if available, protective eyewear (a pair of glasses will suffice) should be worn.*
- ❖ *In all cases, follow the guidelines above and the following:*
 - The anointing may be done with a cotton-tipped swab or a cotton ball which is to be burned or buried after use.

➤ **Palm Sunday ~ Holy Week Services ~ RCIA Catechumens/Candidates**

❖ **Palm Sunday**

Priests will be asked to bless palms privately. On Palm Sunday weekend palms may be distributed in the parking lot of the church at times designated by the pastor on Saturday evening and/or Sunday morning.

❖ **Holy Week Services**

- **Chrism Mass and Oils:** Bishop Murry will celebrate a private Mass with the Deans to bless the oil and Sacred Chrism. The Mass will be available for viewing on-line by priests and the faithful beginning on Tuesday, April 7, 2020 through the Diocesan website. Deans will make arrangements for the distribution of oils in each deanery.
- **Holy Thursday ~ Mass of the Lord's Supper:** Bishop Murry will celebrate the Mass of the Lord's Supper for viewing on-line beginning on Thursday, April 9, 2020 through the Diocesan website.
- **Good Friday Service:** Bishop Murry will celebrate the Good Friday ~ Passion of the Lord Service for viewing on-line beginning on Friday, April 10, 2020 through the Diocesan website.
- **Easter Sunday Mass:** Bishop Murry will celebrate Easter Sunday Mass for viewing on-line beginning on Sunday, April 12, 2020 through the Diocesan website.
- **Easter Vigil ~ RCIA Catechumens/Candidates:** The current circumstances require that the initiation of RCIA Catechumens and reception of Candidates be postponed. Pastors and RCIA teams should determine an appropriate time to properly celebrate the initiation of these people into the Church. Providing it is safe, the Vigil of Pentecost, Sunday, May 31, 2020 should be considered.

These directives/guidelines currently remain in effect by order of Bishop Murry and will be revised or changed should any further directives be issued by the Governor of Ohio, the Bishops of Ohio, or Bishop Murry.

Please contact the Office of Worship with any questions or concerns: 330-744-8451 ext 282 or at Saint William Parish 330-847-8677.