



Office of the Bishop

DIOCESE OF LITTLE ROCK

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March 25, 2021

To the people of the Diocese of Little Rock,

Thanks to your cooperation with the protocols we have had in place to mitigate the danger of the COVID-19 pandemic and the increasing number of people who have been vaccinated, we are now in a position to make a few modifications in the protocols to be observed effective April 1, 2021. We expect to be able to return to pre-pandemic conditions once everyone who wants to get a vaccination is able to get one.

Physical distancing—It is no longer necessary skip every other pew throughout the Church, but people should maintain 6' lateral distancing between family groups.

Mask wearing—Even though mask wearing requirements have been loosened by public authorities in other settings, gatherings for Catholic worship have their own dynamics and so mask wearing will continue to be obligatory for everyone at least until May 12, when we will reassess this requirement in the light of the situation then current. Masks can be removed by lectors when reading and priests at the altar but it is preferred that masks stay on even then.

Music—Continues to be restricted to a cantor and musician at least 12' from the congregation. Choirs can be permitted only when all members have been vaccinated and preferably wearing masks. Congregational singing should be masked and kept to a minimum. The parts of the Mass which are normally sung should be recited when possible.

Holy Water—Can be restored to the Holy Water fonts, possibly beginning with the Easter Vigil if this has not been done so earlier.

Communion on the hand continues to be mandatory during Mass and only in the form of the consecrated host, even when celebrating First Communion. In this extraordinary time of pandemic, communion on the tongue will remain available only after Mass, administered from the tabernacle with hand sanitizing whenever the minister's finger touches the tongue of a recipient. We will reassess the need for this restriction on or before May 12.

Entrance and Exit processions—Parishes can resume processions from the entrance of the Church, including altar servers, instead of entering from the sacristy in places where this has been done but should maintain physical distancing before and after Mass if greeting people.

Offertory procession—Can resume and collection baskets can once again be used.

Altar Servers—Can resume, but they must be masked and maintain physical distancing.

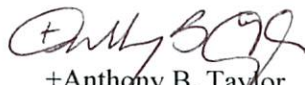
Cry Rooms—Can be used only if 6' distancing between family groups can be maintained.

Adoration Chapels—Can be used if 6' physical distancing can be maintained between adorers.

Communion to the Sick in their homes—unless the minister is a family member or caretaker, the Communion Minister must be fully vaccinated against the COVID-19 corona virus.

I would like to thank you, the Catholics of Arkansas, for how cooperative you have been with the protocols we have had to adopt in order to respond appropriately to the threat posed by the corona virus. We will continue to monitor the prevailing conditions in the community and in our Churches and will continue to make common sense adjustments to our protocols—loosening them or reinforcing them—as changing circumstances seem to require.

Sincerely in Christ,


+Anthony B. Taylor
Bishop of Little Rock