

# *Diocese of Wilmington*

**RESTORING PUBLIC CELEBRATION OF MASS  
and the Sacrament of Reconciliation**

May 20, 2020

**REVISED DECEMBER 11, 2020**

## **OVERVIEW**

While the following guidance represents a directive from Bishop Malooly, all pastors, parochial vicars, and other personnel are to follow all official governmental and public health guidelines enacted for the prevention of the contraction and spread of the COVID-19 virus, including limitations on gatherings, physical distancing, hygiene and sanitation measures and the use of personal protective equipment (PPE).

The size, location, and make up of our parishes vary widely and these recommendations take into account that a one-size-fits-all approach is not possible and not every situation or issue can be anticipated. Pastors may choose to implement additional and more restrictive rules for public worship than those permitted as they take into consideration vulnerable members in their respective parishes and other issues specific to their communities.

These guidelines cover only the beginning phases of a long process which we hope will lead to the full resumption of the liturgical life of our Church. We should not expect to open our doors and return to our normal routine as it was prior to this pandemic. Short and simple Masses should be the starting point, with a slow buildup, very much in the spirit of progressive solemnity.

Pastors should consider forming a task force to help create and implement these guidelines for their local circumstances.

## **GENERAL DIRECTIVES**

1. The dispensation from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass issued on March 12, 2020 remains in place for the Diocese of Wilmington. Parishes should continue to make Masses available to the faithful through such means as internet livestream or recording, ensuring that the faithful may maintain a spiritual connection with their local church.
2. Home visits to the sick by Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion continue to be prohibited until further notice.
3. Anointing of the sick remains permissible on an individual basis. Communal celebrations are still not permitted at this time.
4. Good communication with parishioners is essential, starting before public celebrations resume. The method of determining attendance (e.g. sign-ups, lottery, etc.), the health and hygiene practices, the procedure for receiving Communion, etc. should be clearly communicated in advance of the first public Mass.
5. Those who are symptomatic or who have been exposed to the virus within 14 days are not permitted to enter the church, in accordance with national, state and local

health directives. All attendees are asked to check their temperature at home before coming to church for any reason. Likewise, anyone with a persistent cough or who otherwise does not feel well should not come to church.

6. Parishioners who are particularly vulnerable (e.g. over the age of sixty, existing heart or lung conditions, diabetes, or otherwise immuno-compromised) are **STRONGLY ENCOURAGED**, for their own health, to avoid the risk of attending public celebrations of the Church until all restrictions have been lifted.
7. Individuals are the primary protectors of their own health; during this current situation, there is always risk coming into public spaces. To that end, coming into an open church building carries that same risk. Individuals assume that risk for themselves in these circumstances.
8. All liturgical celebrations should observe limitations on gathering sizes and ensure social distancing.
  - a. Attendance at any liturgy or event in the church is limited to:
    - i. **DELAWARE** - 40 percent of capacity.
    - ii. **MARYLAND** – 50 percent of capacity.
    - iii. Capacity is determined by taking your fire marshal approved maximum occupancy number and multiplying it by .4 or .5, respectively.
  - b. Pastors may determine a lower capacity if they feel it necessary for their particular community.
  - c. Members of the same household may sit together, but there should be at least 6 feet of separation otherwise. **Gatherings before and after celebrations are prohibited, including ministers greeting the faithful before and after Mass.**
9. All members of the assembly and all ministers, except the priest-celebrant, are to wear face coverings at all times while in church. The priest-celebrant is *permitted* to wear a covering during Mass but not *required* except during the distribution of Communion.
  1. Signage should be posted reminding parishioners that the CDC advises that a facial covering does not protect one from the virus but can “help people who may have the virus and do not know it from transmitting it to others.” Note: the CDC advises that children under age 2, or people whose breathing may be impeded by wearing a facial covering are exempt from wearing a facial covering. Visit: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/communication/print-resources.html?Sort=Date%3A%3Adesc>

10. All members of the assembly and all ministers are to sanitize their hands upon entering the church. Hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes, or hand-washing facility (with soap) is to be made available as practical, recognizing that there is a shortage of hand sanitizer and disinfectant wipes. The faithful may also be asked to bring their own.
11. Pews and other surfaces in the church are to be thoroughly disinfected initially and then disinfected again after each time the church is used. Indoor air ventilation and circulation is to be maximized to the extent possible.
12. All hymnals and missalettes are to be removed from the pews and stored for the duration of the pandemic. No other materials may be left in the pews. Printed or e-worship aids are strongly recommended. Printed aids must be disposed of after each liturgy. Some pastors have also suggested allowing parishioners to take missalettes home and bring with them for personal use.
13. Holy water fonts are to remain empty until further notice.
14. Signage reminding parishioners of physical distance should be posted. Some manner of demarcating or designating safe distancing should be put in place, while recognizing that families need not maintain such distancing. There is no perfect solution here, just do the best that you can to ensure proper physical separation.
15. Entrance and exit doors and bathrooms are to be adequately designated, monitored and sanitized.
16. Suggestions for restrooms:
  - a. Only one person at a time may occupy the restroom.
  - b. At the entrance to the restrooms, the floor should be marked in 6-foot intervals, beginning 6 feet from the door.
  - c. Place antibacterial/viral wipes in each stall, if available. Alternatively, make sure a hand washing facility (with soap) is available.
  - d. Post a sign on the door and in each restroom indicating the following:
    - i. Only one occupant in the restroom at a time.
    - ii. When waiting, stand at least six feet apart (as indicated by floor markings).
    - iii. Post signage reminding parishioners to wash hands with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds before leaving the restroom area.
17. Keeping your bathrooms closed during this time is also an option.
18. For more sanitation guidelines visit <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/index.html>

## CELEBRATION OF THE EUCHARIST

1. Pastors may wish to consider using some type of reservation system to allow people to sign up to attend Masses. This is one option that could help. Whatever means are utilized should be clearly communicated to parishioners.
2. Consideration may be given to the use of other available venues (e.g. parish hall) for Masses, especially if this would allow for the sanitizing of other venues also in use. If appropriate, outdoor Masses are permissible. Please consult the Office of Worship should you wish to schedule an outside service.
3. Liturgical Ministers should be thoroughly briefed on the contents of this document and the strict necessity to maintain social distancing and safety for all participants in the Mass.
  - a. Priests who are particularly vulnerable (e.g. over the age of sixty, existing heart or lung conditions, diabetes, or otherwise immuno-compromised) may refrain from distributing communion even when they are the celebrant.
  - b. For the most part, the use of lay ministers in the sanctuary readers, altar servers, sacristans, and extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion should be severely curtailed or omitted altogether. Particularly using only ministers under 60 years of age.**
  - c. Permanent deacons should be mindful of their particular circumstances such as age, pre-existing conditions, secular employment, or family health situations that may limit their participation in parish liturgical ministry.
  - d. Ushers should be limited to the number actually needed, given the size and layout of the church. Ushers must wear face coverings and follow all social distancing precautions.
  - e. The use of choirs is to be omitted until further notice. The preferred musical accompaniment at Mass consists of one cantor and one organist or pianist. Consideration may also be given to omitting congregational singing altogether in order to minimize particle spread.
4. Liturgical celebrations should balance reverence with brevity.
5. The presentation of the gifts by members of the assembly is to be omitted.
6. A collection may be taken up, but baskets are not to be passed and social distancing is to be maintained.

1. Baskets with long handles may be used by ushers if proper social distancing (six feet) can be maintained.
  2. Baskets or other appropriate receptacles may also be placed so that parishioners could drop their offertory in the basket or receptacle as they exit the church.
7. Pastors should consider having the congregation dismissed by rows, under the supervision of ushers, to avoid crowding at the exits of the church.
- 8. The distribution of Holy Communion to the faithful may also be moved to the very end of Mass, after the final blessing. The advantage here is that it minimizes movement during Mass, and it should facilitate an orderly, measured exit.**

### **Directives for the Distribution of Holy Communion**

1. The distribution of the Precious Blood to the laity continues to be suspended until further notice.
2. Each Priest and Deacon is to consume the Precious Blood from separate chalices. (Note that while the Deacon here has his own chalice, he must be given his chalice by the Priest-celebrant; he is not permitted to communicate himself.) Each is to purify the chalice he uses.
3. Immediately after consuming the Sacrament, the Priest-celebrant and Deacon are to disinfect their hands, even if they do not distribute Communion.
4. All Priests, Deacons, and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion must wear face masks for the distribution of Communion.
5. The practice of self-communication (i.e. a communicant taking a host from the ciborium instead of receiving from a minister) remains prohibited.
6. A small table is to be placed next to each station for distribution. On each table is to be placed a corporal, a purificator, and a hand sanitizer.
7. If the minister of Communion touches the hand of a communicant, or if a communicant receives on the tongue, the minister is to place the ciborium on the corporal and sanitize his hands before distributing to the next communicant.
8. Communicants have a right to receive on tongue if they so choose. However, we are to strongly encourage them not to. If they must, then they should wait and come forward at the end of the line. If appropriate, pastors may choose to have a separate line for those who wish to receive on the tongue.

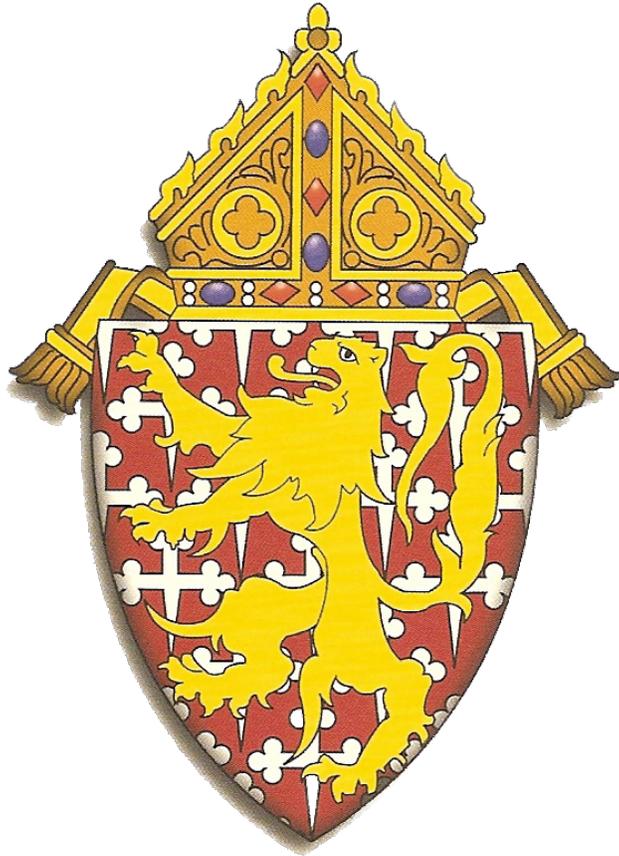
1. The minister of Communion must sanitize his hands in the manner described above after every communicant that receives on the tongue.

### **Instructions for those receiving Holy Communion**

1. All Catholics present who are in a state of grace are invited to receive Communion at this time.
2. Those who have health concerns and do not wish to receive sacramental Communion may make an Act of Spiritual Communion
3. Those who will not receive communion should not come forward with hands crossed for a blessing; there is a blessing for everyone at the end of Mass.
4. Children who will not receive communion but who are old enough to remain quietly in their pew should do so, and not get in the line for Communion.
5. When you approach for Communion, please remain six feet from others in the line and from the minister. When it is your time to receive, keep your mask on and remain six feet away from the minister while he shows the Host and says, The Body of Christ. After you respond, Amen, approach the minister.
6. Receive the Host in your hand, then step six feet to the side, away from the minister. Then loosen your facial covering, consume the Host, and replace the facial covering.

## THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

- The Sacrament of Reconciliation can be made available to the faithful.
- As always, the priest should take great care to ensure that the conversation with the penitent remains absolutely confidential.
- A priest can establish an area for confessions in an open area of the church or church hall, or a Reconciliation room with adequate space for distancing.
- Those waiting to have their confession heard should maintain 6 feet of separation and be wearing masks. Markings on the floor or seating should be arranged accordingly to maintain 6 feet of social distancing.
- A church rectory cannot be used for confessions.
- A priest confessor and the penitent should both wear a mask since by nature confession occurs in a close setting.
- Confessions outside of the church may be offered, for example in a private but visible area on the church grounds.
- Proper sanitization of any areas or surfaces touched by penitent is necessary after each confession.
- The Sacrament of Penance cannot be celebrated by cell phone, FaceTime, Zoom or any other video conferencing technology.
- Cell phones and any other electronic devices (with the exception of a hearing aid) should also not be used to amplify the voice of either the confessor or penitent.
- Even though the Sacrament of Penance is available, the faithful are encouraged to follow the directives of the Holy See regarding perfect contrition.



# *Diocese of Wilmington*

**GUIDELINES FOR THE CELEBRATION OF**

**ORDER OF CHRISTIAN FUNERALS  
THE SACRAMENT OF MATRIMONY  
THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM**

**DURING THE CURRENT PHASE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

**JUNE 8, 2020**

**REVISED DECEMBER 11, 2020**

## OVERVIEW

While the following guidance represents a directive from Bishop Malooly, all pastors, parochial vicars, deacons and other personnel are to follow all official governmental and public health guidelines enacted for the prevention of the contraction and spread of the COVID-19 virus, including limitations on gatherings, physical distancing, hygiene and sanitation measures and the use of personal protective equipment (PPE).

Pastors may choose to implement additional and more restrictive rules for public worship than those permitted as they take into consideration vulnerable members in their respective parishes and other issues specific to their communities.

## FUNERALS

- All previous guidance concerning the Celebration of the Eucharist must be followed.
- The Order for Christian Funeral Outside of Mass is highly encouraged when appropriate.
  - As per instruction 179 of the Order of Christian Funerals, the funeral liturgy outside of Mass is ordinarily celebrated in the parish church but may also be celebrated in a funeral Home. A deacon may also preside over the rite with the pastor's permission. Holy Communion is not to be distributed at this service. The proper vesture is alb and stole, no chasuble or dalmatic.
- Attendance at services in a church is limited to:
  - **DELAWARE - 40 percent of capacity.**
  - **MARYLAND – 50 percent of capacity.**
- All attendees must follow social distancing guidelines, unless they are members of the same household.
- All in attendance must wear masks during the Mass or Service.
- Wakes, Viewings, and Visitations may not take place in any church until further notice.
- There is to be no procession of the casket. The closed casket must be up front, in place prior to the start of the Mass or Service.
- Eulogies are not allowed before, during, or after any Funeral or Service in the church.

- Only the celebrant, deacon, or parish lectors may proclaim readings.
- The wearing of masks and proper social distancing are required at graveside services.
  - The maximum number in attendance for outside grave services is capped at 50 people. During inclement weather the cemetery chapels may be used with a maximum of 10 people in attendance.
- Reminder - Cemeteries are for committal services only. No extended services are permitted.

## SACRAMENT OF MATRIMONY

- All previous guidance concerning the Celebration of the Eucharist must be followed.
- *Order for Celebrating Matrimony without Mass* is highly encouraged
  - Holy Communion is not to be distributed at this service.
- Attendance is limited to:
  - **DELAWARE** - 40 percent of capacity.
  - **MARYLAND** – 50 percent of capacity.
- All wedding guests (including the wedding party but not bride and groom) must follow social distancing guidelines, unless they are members of the same household.
- All attendees must wear masks with the exception of the bride and groom.
- The formal procession of the bridal party may continue to be omitted; If permitted, only one person should walk down the aisle (not in pairs), and six foot distancing should be maintained.
- Only the celebrant, deacon, or parish lectors may proclaim readings.
- For the “Rite of Marriage,” the priest or deacon should stand behind the altar and the bride and groom should stand in front of the altar, to allow for social distancing.
- The wedding rings should be placed on a disinfected dish or small platter ahead of time by the bride or groom themselves. The rings should then be blessed on

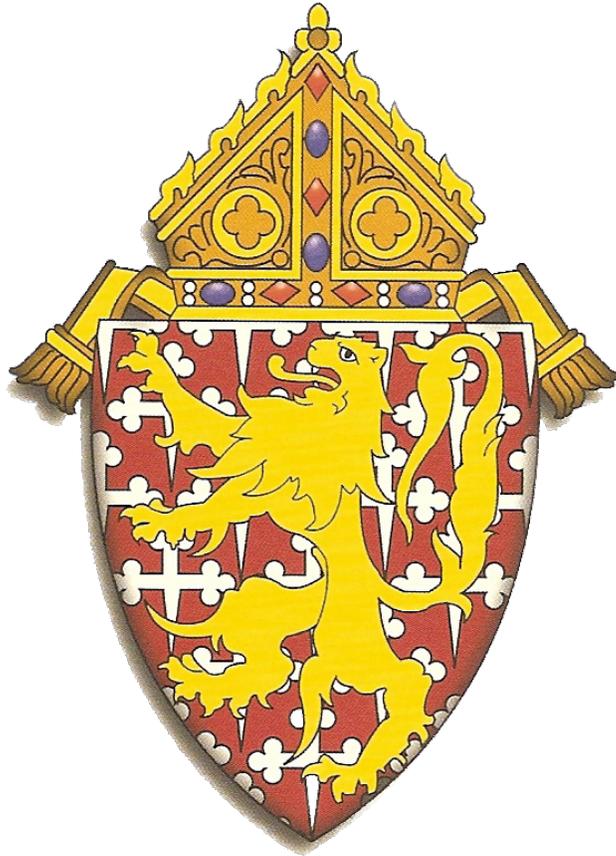
that same dish and then the groom and bride should pick up the rings from the dish themselves to place on their spouse's finger.

- There should be no receiving line or gatherings at the conclusion of the ceremony.
- Guests must depart using social distancing.
  - If any type of program is to be used at the wedding, each guest must get their own individual copy and must be responsible for taking it with them upon leaving.
  - Priests and deacons are encouraged to speak with each couple in advance to share this relevant information.

## **SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM**

- Reminder: All priests and deacons should now be using the newly revised *Order of Baptism of Children, 2nd Edition* which became obligatory on April 12, 2020.
- Communal baptisms are not allowed at this time. The Sacrament of Baptism is permitted only for one child at a time, unless those to be baptized are immediate family members.
  - Baptisms are not to be celebrated during Mass until further notice.
- Attendance is limited to:
  - **DELAWARE** – 40 percent of capacity.
  - **MARYLAND** – 50 percent of capacity.
- All attendees must follow social distancing guidelines, unless they are members of the same household.
- All in attendance must wear masks. The priest or deacon should wear a mask during those portions of the service where he may be in close proximity to another person.
- The Baptismal font should be sanitized after each Baptism.
  - Fresh water should be used for each baptism and then properly disposed.
    - If the church baptismal font cannot be conveniently emptied and sanitized after each baptism (ie. large fonts with running water) then an alternative setup, such as using a large basin, should be used in order for this directive to be followed.
- All readings are to be proclaimed by the celebrant.

- The anointing with the oil of catechumen may be omitted.
- Parents are encouraged to bring their own cloth towel to dry the head of their child after being baptized.
- The priest or deacon should recite the *Ephpheta* Prayer but should not touch the child's mouth or ears as called for in the *Order of Celebrating Baptism*.
- A priest or deacon may use cotton swabs to apply the Oil of Catechumens and the Sacred Chrism. Used swabs must be properly disposed through burning or burying.



# *Diocese of Wilmington*

**GUIDELINES FOR THE CELEBRATION OF  
THE SACRAMENT OF ANOINTING OF THE SICK  
SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION (ELECT AND CANDIDATES)  
and FIRST HOLY COMMUNIONS**

**DURING THE CURRENT PHASE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

June 18, 2020

**REVISED DECEMBER 11, 2020**

## OVERVIEW

While the following guidance represents a directive from Bishop Malooly, all pastors, parochial vicars, deacons and other personnel are to follow all official governmental and public health guidelines enacted for the prevention of the contraction and spread of the COVID-19 virus, including limitations on gatherings, physical distancing, hygiene and sanitation measures and the use of personal protective equipment (PPE).

Pastors may choose to implement additional and more restrictive rules for public worship than those permitted as they take into consideration vulnerable members in their respective parishes and other issues specific to their communities.

## SACRAMENT OF ANOINTING OF THE SICK/ PASTORAL CARE OF THE SICK

- Anointing of the Sick remains permissible on an individual basis. Communal celebrations are still not permitted at this time.
- Mindful of the restrictions at hospitals and other facilities, the priest should adhere to a facility's policy. Priests should use all Personal Protective Equipment that is provided.
  - Non-COVID-19 Patient – At a minimum, a face covering and gloves should be worn when anointing any person who is not known to have had or been exposed to COVID-19.
- A cotton swab or similar applicator should be used to anoint the sick. The cotton swab (or similar applicator) should be properly disposed of through burning or burying.
- No one other than a Priest may anoint the sick. If a priest is unable to enter a patient's room, then the Anointing is omitted, and only the prayers, Apostolic Pardon, and blessing may be given.
- COVID -19 Patient - Taking into consideration the personal risk assumed to yourself and others and also your ability to wear the required PPE, the anointing of a COVID-19 patient is permissible for priests under the age of 60 in good health. A recommended abbreviated Rite of Anointing of the Sick along with other considerations in such cases is presented by the Thomistic Institute, found online here under *Guidelines for Anointing*: [thomisticinstitute.org/covid-sacraments](https://thomisticinstitute.org/covid-sacraments)
  - Prior to any anointing of a COVID-19 patient in a facility, please make sure that the proper PPE will be provided, and proper instruction will be given regarding putting it on and taking it off. CDC guidelines can be found here: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/using-ppe.html>

- Home anointings of COVID-19 patients are not recommended since the appropriate PPE will not be available. Hospital level PPE is not recommended in homes/outside of the hospital as proper use of PPE requires training and appropriate methods of disposal (per CDC guidance).
- Extraordinary ministers of Communion are not permitted to take Communion to the homebound/hospitals/nursing homes until further notice.

## **SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION (ELECT AND CANDIDATES)**

- All previous guidance concerning the Celebration of the Eucharist must be followed.
- The Elect who did not receive the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and the Holy Eucharist at the Easter Vigil may be initiated by their pastor.
  - An individual Mass can also be scheduled as long as the capacity does not exceed:
    - **DELAWARE** - 40 percent of capacity.
    - **MARYLAND** – 50 percent of capacity.
- A cotton swab or similar applicator should be used for anointings. The cotton swab (or similar applicator) should be properly disposed of through burning or burying. Note: A fresh applicator should be used for each Elect or Candidate.
- The Elect are required to participate in a minimum of one scrutiny—this already could have taken place on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Lent. If not, at least one must be done. Bishop Malooly dispenses each Elect from up to 2 scrutinies.

## **FIRST HOLY COMMUNION**

- All previous guidance concerning the Celebration of the Eucharist must be followed.
- Pastors may schedule the parish’s First Holy Communion on an individual or “small group” basis, with the expressed permission of the parents.
- First Communicants are not required to wear masks when they receive First Communion but the priest still must wear one.