

Changes Announced to 'Back in His Presence' Guidelines

October 8, 2020

Bishop David Malloy announced in a letter to all priests Oct. 8, a list of changes to the "Back in His Presence" guidelines issued in June of this year.

Bishop Malloy said in his letter that modifications to the original protocols are being made periodically "based in the experience that we gain as we live through this pandemic."

After consultations with the Deans and with the Presbyteral Council, the following modifications have been made to "Back in His Presence." These changes were made effective for Masses beginning Oct. 10-11, 2020.

Use of the Mask by Lectors at the Ambo

At the discretion of the pastor/administrator, lectors and other ministers at the ambo are permitted to remove their face mask for reading proclamation purposes. The deacon and priest may also do so at the ambo for the Gospel and Homily. Masks shall continue to be worn by priests at all times when at the altar and while at the presider chair.

Reception of Holy Communion on the Tongue

At this time, in light of a number of inquiries the Chancery has received, the reception of the Eucharist on the tongue is permitted under specific protocols at Mass, and at Communion Services at all parishes.

While the faithful are strongly encouraged to receive Holy Communion in the hand during this coronavirus outbreak, pastors/administrators may make arrangements for reception of the Sacrament on the tongue using one of the following options:

- 1) A separate line must be provided for those faithful who wish to receive Holy Communion on the tongue; or
- 2) Those faithful who wish to receive Holy Communion on the tongue do so after all other faithful have received in the hand; or
- 3) The faithful who wish to receive Holy Communion on the tongue do so at the end of Mass.

Whichever option is chosen by the pastor/parochial administrator, there should be separate reception of Holy Communion for those receiving in the hand and for those receiving on the tongue. When reception on the tongue is done, because of the proximity of the minister's hand to the mouth of the communicant, the minister must sanitize between each communicant reception.

Whether a pastor/parochial administrator allows this form of receiving Communion, shall be a decision within his discretion. If a pastor/parochial administrator because of the pandemic or his

own personal health does not feel comfortable implementing this form of receiving Holy Communion, he has the authority to decline to implement it in his parish. Similarly, a parochial vicar should not be required to administer Holy Communion on the tongue if he feels uncomfortable or has personal health concerns.

The reception of Holy Communion on the tongue may begin at the October 10-11, 2020 weekend Masses. All other protocols regarding masks, social distancing, traffic flow regulations, recording of attendance, capacity requirements and sanitation are still in force as outlined in the “Back in His Presence” documents.

If you have questions or need assistance in this process please direct your inquiries to reopen@rockforddiocese.org.

Extraordinary Ministers

At the discretion of the pastor/parochial administrator, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are permitted if necessary. Extraordinary Ministers must follow all liturgical and safety protocols and be strictly trained to wear a mask and to sanitize appropriately. At this time, Extraordinary Ministers are limited to Mass only.

Moving beyond Essential and Sacramental Meetings and Gatherings

Until now, parishes, schools and diocesan entities have been permitted to hold only sacramental and essential gatherings and meetings on the premises. At this time, effective today, all other meetings and gatherings typical of the normal operations of a parish, school or diocesan facility are permitted to be held in person on the premises, provided the “Back in His Presence” directives as well as rules of the Illinois Governor and local and state public health departments are followed. Funeral visitations may return to being held at the Church, following the protocols.

Hence, at this time, and in light of the Governor’s mitigation effective October 3, 2020, which affect parishes, schools and diocesan facilities in Boone, Carroll, DeKalb, Jo Daviess, Lee, Ogle, Stephenson, Whiteside and Winnebago Counties, all in-person meetings and gatherings on premises are limited to 25 people or 25% of room capacity, provided the safety protocols of social distancing, mask wearing and cleaning, etc., is followed. Meetings and gatherings at parishes, schools and diocesan facilities in McHenry and Kane Counties are limited to 50 people, with those same protocols.

To be clear, sacramental gatherings such as Masses, baptisms, weddings and funerals held in the Church are limited to 30% of capacity, following the protocols.

Meetings and Gatherings with Food

At this time, food at these meetings and gatherings will be permitted under the following conditions: food and beverage must be single serve containers, such as a boxed lunch or refreshments individually wrapped. All utensils and plates must be disposable and intended for one-time use. Food may be consumed on parish grounds under this circumstance provided social

distancing can be maintained, and “Back in His Presence” and the rules of the Illinois Governor and local and state health departments are followed.

Parish or school sponsored or fund raising events that require preparing food, such as fish fries, spaghetti dinners, food for the poor, may be prepared in parish kitchens, but only for drive-up, “grab & go” or drop-off distribution. All people who prepare or distribute the food are to be screened to assure they are free of any contagious illness, must be properly trained in food preparation protocols per their local health department, and wear PPE at all times (e.g. mask, gloves, etc.). At this time, for greater safety, sit down or dine-in consumption on parish grounds of such food prepared on the premises is not allowed for these food-centered events.

Additionally, sit down or dine-in consumption of food prepared at a parishioner’s home and brought to the premises is not allowed to be consumed on the premises. Catered meals are not allowed, whether that is food served buffet-style, family-style at tables, or by a server on individual plates. Food consumption at meetings and gatherings on the premises may occur only when the food is individually, commercially wrapped, or commercially boxed such as a box lunch as noted above. A parish meeting or gathering held off premises at a restaurant or other commercial establishment which includes food consumption is subject to the rules in place at that establishment.

With this return to holding meetings and gatherings which, though not essential to operations of the parish or school, contribute importantly to the life of the parish or school, pastors/parochial administrators are to use their discretion in permitting meetings and gatherings.

Charitable Events

Food pantry or seasonal charitable collections (groceries, clothing items, Christmas gifts, etc.) for distribution are permitted. Collection of food items is to be limited to unopened boxes, cans and/or other items in their original packaging.

The selling on church or school property of Christmas wreaths or packaged food such as popcorn by the Boy Scouts or other groups, and the sale of Christmas trees by the Knights of Columbus or other groups is permitted provided the protocols are followed: social distancing, and mask and glove wearing by the vendor and mask wearing by the buyers.