

18 May 2021

To All the Faithful of the Catholic Diocese of Lexington:

On May 13, 2021, Governor Beshear issued an Executive Order lifting the mask mandate for persons fully vaccinated against COVID-19. In addition, he also made changes impacting the capacity for indoor and outdoor events that will go into effect May 28, 2021. The following Directives for Public Masses and Other Liturgies during COVID-19 reflect these changes.

Please note, people who are not fully vaccinated are asked to seriously consider worshipping from home, participating in streamed masses and/or praying, reading scripture, and sharing faith with your families. We do not have to worship in person and the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days is still suspended. We do have the divine commandment to keep holy the Lord's Day and can do so in our own homes safely.

In addition, those who have a condition or are taking medications that weaken the immune system are urged to consult with a healthcare provider before worshipping in person. Even if fully vaccinated, such persons may not be fully protected and extra precautions may be warranted.

### **I. Non-Optional Directives effective May 13, 2021**

- Dispensation from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass continues in the Diocese of Lexington until further notice.
- Social distancing rules remain in place (six feet apart except for immediate family). Social distancing is to be practiced at all times and includes seating, processions, communion lines and any lines waiting for admission to the church or exiting.
- Masks are NOT required for people who are fully vaccinated, per the Center for Disease Control (CDC) definition below.
  - A person is considered fully vaccinated two weeks after receiving the second dose in a two-dose series, such as the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine, or two weeks after a single-dose vaccine, such as the Johnson & Johnson vaccine.
  - A person who does not meet these requirements, regardless of age, is not fully vaccinated and should continue taking all precautions until fully vaccinated.
- Those who attend Mass but are not fully vaccinated must continue to mask. As the new CDC guidance and governor's directives make it impossible to enforce mask restriction, all attendees are strongly encouraged to get vaccinated as soon as possible.
- Priests, liturgical ministers and sacristans must wash/sanitize hands before and after Mass and before and after the distribution of Communion.
- Communion is distributed only in the form of bread and **given to communicants only in the hand.**

- Single-use worship aids can be used. Songbooks, prayer cards and other “permanent” items are to be removed from the pews.

## **II. Non-Optional Directives effective May 28, 2021 (in addition to May 13 directives)**

- Attendance at each individual Mass or liturgy is **limited to no more than 75 % of the regular occupancy** of your church provided that social distancing of six feet can be maintained.
- Children’s Liturgy of the Word, post-Mass social or gatherings may resume, but social distancing rules apply.
- Paper bulletins can be provided.

## **III. Unchanged Non-Optional Directives (in addition to the May 13 and May 28 directives)**

- Elderly and vulnerable populations are to be encouraged to participate in the live-streamed Masses.
- Holy water fonts are to remain empty.
- Hand sanitizer is to be available at least at church entrances and preferably in additional places.
- There is to be no physical contact during the Lord’s Prayer or during the Sign of Peace.
- Hand sanitizer is to be used before the distribution of Communion. If inadvertent contact (i.e. hand touching hand) is made, the minister of Communion is to stop and sanitize hands before continuing the distribution. Having a place to set the ciborium and have access to sanitizer nearby would be helpful.
- Gloves are not to be worn by the ministers or recipients of communion.
- Assembly is to be instructed that there will be no vocal words at the distribution of communion, the minister will hold up the sacred host and the communicant will bow.
- Frequently touched surfaces in the church are to be cleaned and sanitized between liturgies (e.g. pews, door handles, microphones, etc.)
- No choirs. Cantors and musicians are allowed with social distancing; congregational singing should be limited, masked, and social distanced.
- Ushers and hospitality ministers are to wear masks and not make physical contact with congregants.
- No offertory procession; bread and wine remain in sanctuary and covered before being placed on the altar. Hosts to be consecrated for the people are to be placed on the altar in such a way that the priest is not speaking directly over them during the Eucharistic prayer; his own host is to be separate.

- No passing of collection baskets or plates. Receptacles should be placed near entrances or in clearly identified places for receiving offerings. Persons who handle envelopes or cash are to carefully wash hands afterwards. Offertory counters are to wear gloves and masks for their own protection.
- Sacristans and those who assist in preparing communion elements must carefully wash their hands and wear facemasks when in contact with bread and wine.
- Concelebrants and deacons are not to share from the same chalice.
- Any greetings after mass by the celebrant and/or deacons will still require social distancing

## SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION

### BAPTISM:

- **Adults:** parishes will have to determine, based on the numbers to be baptized whether to further delay, whether all can be baptized in the same liturgy or if it is preferable to divide into smaller groups; in larger parishes, if not delayed these will probably have to be celebrated in a special liturgy even though the normal preference would be to have the celebration with fuller participation of the parish. To the extent possible, Sunday (any Sunday) is the preferred day for celebration. In all cases, those Elect who have reached the age of reason must be confirmed and receive the Eucharist for the first time in the same celebration. Water is to be blessed as part of the liturgy. Unless there is only one person being baptized or multiple members of the same household, immersion is not practical at this time because the water would have to be changed, and new water blessed for each baptism. In baptism by pouring, the blessed water should not be taken from the same receptacle where water from a previous baptism has been poured. The words spoken by the priest during the explanatory rites should be spoken only once for all participants when the priest is at a safe distance from those around him, including the newly baptized. Sanitization of hands should be employed as needed when touching objects and people. Sponsors/godparents could be asked to light and hold the candle and place the white garments. Masks should be used and hands sanitized by the priest before and after the laying on of hands and anointing (Confirmation).
- **Infants:** During the course of the pandemic, infant baptisms should not take place during the Sunday Mass unless there is sufficient space for social distancing for all. Group baptisms may have to be limited for the same reason and to keep the blessed water clean for each baptism. The anointing with the Oil of Catechumens is to be omitted. Water is to be blessed as part of the liturgy. The blessed water should not be taken from the same receptacle where water from a previous baptism has been poured. The words spoken by the priest or deacon during the explanatory rites should be spoken only once for all participants when the minister is at a safe distance from those around him, including the newly baptized. Sanitization of hands should be employed as needed

when touching objects and people. Sponsors/godparents could be asked to light and hold the candle and place the white garments. The *ephphatha* rite is to be omitted. Masks should be used and hands sanitized by the priest before and after the anointing with Chrism.

### **CONFIRMATION APART FROM BAPTISM:**

- **Those being received into the Church:** Priests already enjoy the faculty to confirm them at any time. Similar to the Elect, parishes will have to determine, based on the numbers to be confirmed whether to further delay the reception, whether all the candidates can be received and confirmed in the same liturgy or if preferable to divide into groups; in larger parishes, if not delayed these will probably have to be celebrated in a special liturgy even though the normal preference would be to have the celebration with more of the parish represented. To the extent possible, Sunday (any Sunday) is the preferred day for celebration.
- **Youth and Adults already part of the Catholic Church:** Again it will be a pastoral decision whether to delay the sacrament until it can be safely celebrated with a larger assembly or whether to divide those prepared for the sacrament into smaller groups. For those parishes that prefer to form smaller groups of confirmandi, pastors may request and will be given the faculty to confirm in these instances. The request will need to be in writing and specific to each occasion. The bishop will make his schedule as flexible as possible to accommodate revised confirmation planning; it is unlikely that he would be able to celebrate more than two confirmations at any particular parish.

### **FIRST COMMUNION:**

- If celebrated during the course of the pandemic, communion will only be given under the species of bread and in the hand. While Sunday parish Masses are usually preferable occasions for First Communion, it can be celebrated on any day. Parishes may choose to spread First Communions over a long series of Sundays based on the number of participants or create special Masses for this purpose. First Communions should only be celebrated during Mass, not during communion services.

### **RECONCILIATION:**

For the foreseeable future, safe distancing of six feet between penitent and priest must be maintained. Reconciliation should take place in a soundproof setting.

### **ANOINTING OF THE SICK:**

Priests should be as generous as possible in offering the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick while maintaining social distancing for all of the rite except the laying on of hands and the actual anointing. A cotton ball can be used for the anointing, and hand sanitization should precede and

follow any contact. In hospitals, nursing facilities and other institutions the directives of the facility are to be followed. Older or priests susceptible to illness should seek the assistance of other priests to cover for them.

### **MARRIAGE:**

Follow the special directives as described for Mass, whether the mass is celebrated or not.

### **GENERAL:**

- In all sacramental celebrations, consideration should be given to live-streaming in order to reduce the number of people in actual attendance.
- Ministry to the homebound should be exercised with care to maintain social distancing, use of masks and hand sanitizer. Ministers to the homebound should not be in the vulnerable category.
- Karen Rood in the Office of Worship is in contact with colleagues around the region and can be a resource for particular questions or circumstances.
- The bishop is willing to discuss particular needs and special circumstances as needed. No permissions for variations from these norms will be given over the phone, the request and response will have to be in writing (e-mail is fine for this purpose).
- There can be no exemptions from social distancing requirements.