

COVID-19 POLICIES & PROCEDURES FOR THE PUBLIC MASS & SACRAMENTS

Promulgated May 14, 2021
Effective May 22, 2021, Vigil Mass

I. Preamble

This “COVID-19 Policies & Procedures for the Public Mass & Sacraments” (“Policies”) revises and supersedes any and all prior COVID-19 policies and procedures except for those governing the diocesan elementary schools. For the sake of continuity, the procedures at our diocesan elementary schools will remain in effect until the end of the academic year.

COVID-19 Policies & Procedures

II. Sunday Mass Obligation & Exemptions

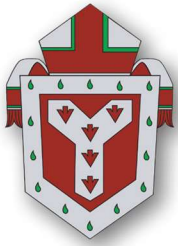
- A. **Obligation for Sunday Mass:** The general dispensation from the Sunday obligation and from other holy days of obligation will be lifted and the obligations restored and reinstated starting Saturday, May 22, 2021, the Vigil of the Solemnity of Pentecost.
- B. **Exemptions to the Obligation:** The exemptions or excuses for the Sunday obligation and from other holy days of obligation remain under the normal conditions:

“The Sunday Eucharist is the foundation and confirmation of all Christian practice. For this reason the faithful are obliged to participate in the Eucharist on days of obligation, unless excused for a serious reason (for example, illness, the care of infants) or dispensed by their own pastor. Those who deliberately fail in this obligation commit a grave sin” (CCC n. 2181).

Furthermore, it remains that anyone who is sick or is experiencing COVID-19 symptoms should not attend Mass.

III. General Mass Protocols

- A. **Face Coverings for those Attending Mass:** Unless a municipal mandate is in effect, persons attending Mass have the option of wearing a face-covering, i.e., mask. The pastor cannot mandate that masks be worn by those attending Mass (except as described in **Section III.B**) nor can he mandate they not be worn.
- B. **Social Distancing at Mass:** Pastors may designate some seating at Mass where wearing a mask and social distancing is still required, but this designated area should not comprise more than one-third of the total seating capacity of the sanctuary. Alternatively, pastors may establish special Mass times in which all are required to wear masks and social distance. Overall, the majority of Masses offered by a parish and the



majority of all seating at any Mass, except for the special Mass described herein, should be mask-optional and open seating.

- C. **Masks & Social Distancing for Clerics, Etc.:** Those participating in the Mass, e.g., priests, deacons, altar servers, extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, lectors, etc., are not required to wear masks nor may they be mandated to do so unless at a special Mass as described in **Section III.B**). Social distancing is no longer required for those serving in the Mass.
- D. **Reinstated Practices:** The following should be reinstated (a) the use of hymnals, missalettes, and other similar materials; (b) the use of Holy Water founts (i.e., stoups); (c) the normal practice of collections during Mass; (d) the procession of the gifts; (e) the sign of peace; (f) a normal routine of sanctuary sanitization; (g) a normal routine of exiting the sanctuary after Mass; (h) “cry rooms” and other similar facilities; (i) social receptions after Mass; and (j) the use of extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion.
- E. **Distribution of Holy Communion:** As social distancing is no longer required, pastors should reinstitute a normal practice for forming lines for the distribution of Holy Communion. The practice of priests, deacons, and extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion sanitizing their hands and wearing a mask for the distribution of Holy Communion is optional and at the discretion of the individual (**Section III.C**). Pastors may continue to institute various protocols for those who wish to receive on the tongue. Distribution of the Precious Blood remains suspended. The practice of intinction for concelebrants and deacons is optional.
- F. **General Prohibitions:** (a) Masses held in the parking lots of parishes or other similar venues are prohibited; (b) Masses may still be livestream via social media, but should not otherwise be posted or stored online—persons viewing a livestream should only have the opportunity to do so during the live celebration of the Mass; and (c) holding hands during the Lord’s Prayer is prohibited, as, regardless of these Policies regarding COVID-19, it is not part of the Mass in the Roman rite.
- G. **Pastoral Discretion:** As pastors best understand their facilities and parishioners, pastors are encouraged to adopt and apply local policies and procedures that supplement these diocesan Policies. Pastoral discretion is not permitted to contradict these Policies unless otherwise approved by Bishop Konderla.

End of Policies

Revised May 14, 2021
Office of the Bishop