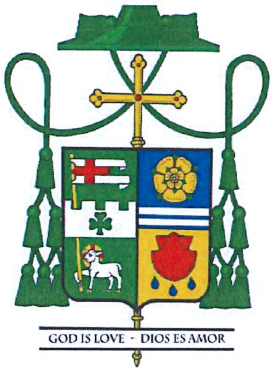
BY MANDATE
OF THE
BISHOP OF PATERSON



PROTOCOLS FOR LITURGICAL CELEBRATIONS IN TIME OF PANDEMIC

PREFACE

In addressing the importance of liturgical formation, our Holy Father, Pope Francis, emphasizes that in our ministry: "The task that awaits us is indeed essentially that of spreading among the *People of God* the splendor of the *living mystery* of the Lord, Who makes Himself manifest in the liturgy."[1] As we celebrate liturgical life in a time of pandemic, we seek to encourage the faithful in the virtue of hope through Christ's life-giving sacraments.

Through these guidelines we make prudent accommodation to the needs of health and safety while remaining faithful to liturgical discipline. These guidelines are given as a *vademecum* (a handbook or guide to be kept constantly at hand for consultation) for pastors, celebrants, and liturgical ministers so that all of us attend to the prayerful celebration of the liturgy within a healthy setting. In using these guidelines, we are providing a liturgical formation which assures the faithful that the integrity of the sacred liturgy is maintained while we observe these temporary measures in order to provide for the spiritual and physical wellbeing of all who take part of in the liturgy.

[1] Pope Francis to the *Plenary Assembly to the Congregation for the Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments* (February 14, 2019).

These diocesan mandated guidelines are a means for pastors and other pastoral ministers and lay staff members to provide a more healthy space for worship. As a general norm, the pastor may use his prudent discretion to adapt these guidelines to the pastoral setting of the local community. If there are questions about a particular norm or if clarification is required, the pastor may contact the Vicar General and Moderator of the Curia.

All members of the parish staff and each parish family and diocesan institution should continue to work together in order to respect both liturgical and health concerns.

THE PRECEPT OF MASS ATTENDANCE

1. The dispensation from the obligation to participate in Sunday and Holy Day Masses remains in effect until further notice. Livestream participation is highly recommended for those unable to take part in the liturgy in person.

2. Those who are particularly vulnerable to the coronavirus, i.e. those sixty (60) years of age and over, and especially those with one or several underlying medical conditions, may follow Mass at home via livestream or television until all restrictions are removed for those most vulnerable.

3. A person with a cough or fever of any kind should not take part in Mass in person.

4. Young people who are healthy and who do not regularly come in contact with those who have serious underlying medical conditions are encouraged to take part in Mass in person.

OCCUPANCY OF CHURCHES AND ACCESS TO CHURCHES

1. Churches may be open for private visits outside of scheduled Liturgies, but this is left to the discretion of the pastor. The hours should be posted and disinfection should follow. Office hours should also be posted in the bulletin and on line.

2. In keeping with the most recent mandate of the State of New Jersey (September 2, 2020) indoor Mass attendance is 150 people or 25% - whichever number is lower.

3. It is left to the discretion of the pastor to determine how limited occupancy is to maintained, e.g. first-come, first-served basis, registering on line, lottery etc.

4. Provision for church access and use of rest room facilities should be made for the disabled to the greatest degree possible.

5. At all gatherings social distancing (keeping 6 feet from other persons) is to be observed. Members of same household are not required to follow social distancing, but must keep 6 feet from non-household members. Members of an extended family are not required to follow social distancing within the extended family unit unless some of its members have an underlying medical condition and/or a compromised immune system. Those with serious underlying conditions should carefully weigh the prudence of in person participation in gatherings.

6. Certain pews are to be closed to make certain that social distancing is maintained. Temporary and safe markings should be made on the floor to maintain social distancing, as well.

7. A reasonable period should be scheduled between the times when people leave the church so the entire church can be disinfected. Only then can people be admitted into the next Mass.

8. Adequate disinfecting supplies, masks, and sanitizing stations should be available for all churches and public parish buildings. All persons two years and older must wear a face mask in the church or in other public buildings.

9. Maintenance staff should use the guidelines from the diocese or Center for Disease Control on the best and most practical ways to disinfect the building.

10. The number of church and office doors which may be accessed for entrance and exit is left to the discretion of the pastor.

11. Volunteers should be available to welcome parishioners to church, maintaining six feet of social distance and wearing masks, directing them toward seating and limiting the number of persons to whom the church is accessible.

OTHER LITURGICAL MATTERS

1. Holy Water fonts and the baptismal fonts are to remain empty. If the faithful wish to have access to holy water for use as a sacramental at home, small bottles of water may be blessed and distributed at the discretion of the pastor.

2. Depending on availability of priests, parishes may schedule more frequent Masses.

3. A temporary plexiglass shield may be installed at the *ambo* and cantor's lectern at the discretion of the pastor.

4. Those assisting in liturgical ministries at the altar should maintain a 6-foot distance from the priest and from each other. The *Roman Missal* should be placed on a stand before the presider's chair or at the altar; the Missal and other liturgical books are not to be held by a server for the celebrant's orations.

5. Altar Servers may begin to assist at the altar at the discretion of the pastor. The altar servers must wear a mask while serving and the priest and deacon must wear mask while they are less than 6 feet from the server. Altar servers must maintain social distance from others servers and wear masks even while socially distanced from other ministers and servers.

6. Offertory processions remain discontinued for the time-being.

7. The ushers should not take collection(s) in the normal way for the time-being. Collection baskets are to be placed in appropriate places to receive the offering of the faithful.

8. Electronic giving should be encouraged weekly so that the practice becomes more widespread now and permanently into the future.

9 During the Eucharistic Prayer, the hosts to be consecrated should be in a covered ciborium, or covered with a pall, or purificators. The celebrant's host is received by him alone. Both the bread and the wine may be kept covered during the epiclesis through the words on institution and then afterward following the showing of the Body and Blood of Christ to the faithful at the elevation for adoration.

10. The Exchange of peace is to be shared without human contact.

11. It is not required that the assisting deacons receive from the chalice at Holy Communion. Concelebrating priests must receive the Precious Blood. It is highly recommended that the concelebrants receive by intinction from a chalice separate from that of the principal celebrant.

12. In order to avoid contact during the communion procession, before distributing Holy Communion, while standing at the center of the altar, and while showing the Body of Christ to the faithful, the priest may, at the discretion of the pastor, say to the entire congregation, "The Body of Christ" with all of the faithful who will receive Holy Communion responding "Amen."

13. Social distancing should be maintained by the faithful when they approach to receive the Eucharist at Communion time. In order to preserve the integrity of the Order of Mass, Holy Communion should be distributed at the designated time in the Order of Mass. For the time-being, the pastor may use his discretion to move the distribution to the period following Mass.

14. Six feet of distance between each person in the line processing to receive the Eucharist is to be observed.

15. The faithful should be encouraged to bring hand sanitizer to use before the reception of Holy Communion.

16. The priest, deacon, or Extraordinary Minister of the Eucharist should use hand sanitizer before and after the distribution of Holy Communion.

17. The Body of Christ should be placed in the hands of the communicant. The faithful are encouraged to receive Holy Communion in the hand.

18. Those members of the faithful who wish to receive Holy Communion on the tongue may be asked, at the discretion of the pastor, to receive the Eucharist following the Dismissal.

19. The distribution of the Precious Blood from the chalice is discontinued for the foreseeable future.

20. The priest and other ministers of Holy Communion should have hand sanitizer nearby during the distribution of Holy Communion for use if necessary.

21. To avoid crowding at the end of Mass, people may be dismissed by the ushers.

LITURGICAL MUSIC

1. While congregational singing is not to be encouraged, cantors may sing the Entrance Hymn, the parts of the Mass, the Responsorial Psalm, the Preparation and Communion Hymn, and the Closing Hymn at the discretion of the pastor.

2. There is to be no choir until further notice. Singing may be carried out by cantors or *scholas* of no more than four people who are able to maintain social distance. The Responsorial Psalm may be sung but the response of the people is not to be prompted by the cantor. The use of the proper Antiphons of Mass may also be used in place of hymns.

3. It is left to the discretion of the pastor to determine the degree to which parts of the Mass are sung or recited at each celebration. While the Responsorial Psalm and proper Mass parts may be sung by the cantor, they may also be recited at the discretion of the pastor.

4. All hymnals and *Missalettes* should remain absent the church pews. If it is possible to use audio-visual means to project texts for the celebration of the liturgy toward spaces accessible to the assembly, this may be done at the discretion of the pastor.

5. Hand-bell choirs may be resumed or formed at the discretion of the pastor.

6. The implementation of the guidelines relating to liturgical music is left to the discretion of the pastor in light of the pastoral situation of the community.

BAPTISM

Baptism for infants should not ordinarily be too long delayed (*Code of Canon Law*, 867 §§1, 2). If the pastor deems it necessary, the celebration of baptism may have limited attendance that admits only the parents who present the infant for baptism

and the godparents. A larger congregation, not to exceed the minimum capacity for church occupancy is permissible for the celebration. It is left to the discretion of the pastor, but it is desirable to celebrate baptisms individually, that is one family at a time, until further notice.

The Baptism of infants may be carried out as prescribed for the most part. At the signing of with the cross at the beginning of the Rite, it is best to limit that gesture to the parents. The use of the Oil of Catechumens is always an optional Rite while the Prayer of Exorcism which precedes the optional anointing is integral to the Rite of Baptism. Both the Oil of Catechumens and the Sacred Chrism may be administered with cotton or a cotton swab.

The baptismal font should be emptied following the celebration.

THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

For now, when a priest is approached for celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, the confessional is not used. There should be a safe social distance between the priest and penitent in a public and yet appropriate space. Masks should be worn by both priest and penitent.

ANOINTING OF THE SICK

1. Communal celebrations of the Anointing of the Sick are discouraged for the time-being.

2. The celebration of the Sacrament of the Anointing is to take place in hospitals and nursing homes following consultation with the administration and policies of the aforementioned institutions.

3. The priest is to wear a mask when administering the Sacrament and he may wear gloves.

4. The anointing of the faithful may be made with cotton, a cotton swab, or with gloves. In case of necessity, anointing on the forehead alone or on the hands alone if necessary suffices (*Code of Canon Law*, c. 1000 §§1, 2).

CONFIRMATION

A recent response from the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments (June 2, 2020) indicated that the anointing with Sacred Chrism at Confirmation may be administered with cotton or with gloves and is valid. The cotton or gloves must be reverently disposed of following the celebration through burning. Individual cotton swabs or gloves must be used in anointing each candidate if this option is employed.

FUNERALS AND WEDDINGS

The norms for the celebration of Mass are applicable to the celebration of Funerals and Weddings. Care should be taken to emphasize the mandatory nature of the church occupancy mandates which are observed for health and safety.

LITURGICAL INFORMATION SHARING

Please see httpd://rcdop.org/reference for suggestions regarding the use of liturgical music during the time of pandemic along with other liturgical information.

A SPECIAL NOTE

Priests who have special health considerations and underlying health conditions that predispose them to contracting the coronavirus, should seek younger members of the presbyterate to celebrate when possible or approach the Office of Monsignor Mahoney or Monsignor Hart to arrange for the coverage of Masses during this time of pandemic.

THESE PROTOCOLS AND PROCEDURES ARE PROMULGATED FOR THE DIOCESE OF PATERSON AND EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY SUPERSEDING ALL PREVIOUSLY MANDATES REGARDING THE LITURGY IN TIME OF PANDEMIC.

ALL TO THE CONTRARY NOTWITHSTANDING.

GIVEN AT THE CHANCERY THIS 29TH DAY OF SEPTEMBER, 2020, FEAST OF THE ARCHANGELS, MICHAEL, GABRIEL, AND RAPHAEL.

MOST REVEREND KEVIN J. SWEENEY, D.D
BISHOP OF PATERSON

REVEREND MONSIGNOR JAMES T. MAHONEY, PH.D.
VICAR GENERAL AND MODERATOR OF THE CURIA