

**Healthy at Worship – Archdiocese of Louisville**  
**Masses and other Liturgical Celebrations During the COVID-19 Pandemic –**

**Revised April 30, 2021**

**General Information**

1. Archbishop Kurtz continues to dispense from the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation for the Archdiocese of Louisville, until further notice. Anyone who is sick or living with someone who is sick should stay home, as should anyone who feels vulnerable for other reasons.
2. Parishes are asked to continue communicating with parishioners who are unable to attend Mass, to visit them and make sacraments available to them if possible, and to use virtual technology to assist if applicable.
3. Beginning on Monday, May 3, parishes that are ready to do so may increase seating capacity in their churches by reducing the required distance between family groups. However, there should always be at least three feet of distance between family groups.
4. Continue to require a mask or facial covering for all persons except small children and those with medical exemptions.
5. Continue to regularly clean frequently touched surfaces and objects (e.g., tables, pews, countertops, light switches, doorknobs, and cabinet handles).
6. The directives outlined in this document are to be observed for any and all events held in the church, including but not limited to funerals, weddings, Eucharistic adoration, and prayer services.
7. Permission continues to be granted for liturgies to be celebrated at other places on parish property, including outdoors. For outdoor liturgies, the social distancing guidelines apply but per the Governor's change to the mask mandate on April 26, masks are not required for groups of less than 1,000 people.
8. The directives for mask-wearing and social distancing outlined in this document are to be observed for other in-person gatherings on church property, such as study groups and meetings. Parishes are encouraged to utilize virtual meeting technology when appropriate.
9. Parishes are encouraged to utilize all avenues of parish communications, as well as clear signage on-site, to communicate safety protocols as they evolve.
10. The CDC indicates that small groups of fully-vaccinated individuals may gather without masks. Churches may observe this guidance when applicable. However, in order that liturgical celebrations may continue to be accessible to everyone, even vaccinated persons are asked to continue wearing masks at Mass. Furthermore, in no way should parishes attempt to segregate vaccinated and un-vaccinated persons or to make vaccination a requirement for participation in the life of the parish.

## **I. Directives for the Celebration of Mass**

11. Temperature screening for non-symptomatic persons is no longer necessary according to guidance from the Kentucky Department of Health.
12. Consider having hospitality ministers open doors for parishioners as they arrive and depart or prop open doors to decrease the number of people touching the doors.
13. Parishes may wish to remove water from the stoups by entrances or even from the main font. If water is used, it must be regularly cleaned and refreshed (at least weekly).
14. Provide hand sanitizer at all church entrances. Have hand sanitizer available in or near the sanctuary and require all Communion ministers to use it prior to distributing Holy Communion.
15. Lectors, presiders, and other liturgical ministers may remove their masks when speaking. Cantors may remove their masks when singing. All Communion ministers (ordinary and extraordinary ministers) must wear masks when distributing Holy Communion.
16. Music: Assembly singing with masks is acceptable. Choirs and musical ensembles may exercise their ministries, so long as they adhere to the masking and social distancing guidelines outlined here. Limit the use of aerosol-producing instruments (e.g. trumpet, flute). Available space will limit the size of such ensembles; parishes will vary greatly on how many musicians they can safely accommodate.
17. Hymnals may be returned to pews if desired. However, disposable worship aids for the faithful are recommended. Worship aids can also help to communicate safety protocols and liturgical directions for the assembly.
18. Other gatherings connected to Mass, such as Children's Liturgy of the Word, may resume so long as they adhere to the masking and social distancing guidelines outlined here. Food may not be served.
19. Parishes may resume the practice of bringing forward the gifts of bread and wine at the preparation of gifts, so long as those presenting and receiving the gifts sanitize their hands immediately before and after this ritual.
20. Collection: It is not recommended to pass a common basket from person to person. Instead, parishioners may place their offerings in baskets at entrances to the Church, or baskets on handles may be passed by hospitality ministers. Collection counters: consider wearing gloves when handling money.
21. The exchange of peace among the assembly may be omitted or expressed through gestures that do not involve physical touching.

22. All ministers of Holy Communion (ordinary and extraordinary ministers) must sanitize their hands immediately prior to the distribution of Holy Communion. During the course of the pandemic, it may be helpful to sanitize in a way that is visible to the assembly, in order to reduce anxiety about health concerns. It is advisable for the presider to sanitize also before the beginning of the Eucharistic Prayer.
23. Continue to suspend distribution of the chalice to the faithful. If possible, use additional chalices for concelebrant(s) and/or deacon(s).
24. Distribution of Holy Communion at Mass occurs during the Communion Rite. Parishes should consider discontinuing the practice of distribution following the final blessing.

## **II. Directives for Other Sacramental Celebrations**

25. All sacramental celebrations must follow the same directives for mask-wearing and social distancing outlined in this document. In instances where contact is unavoidable (for example, the laying of hands or anointing with oil), hand sanitizer should be used before and after contact.
26. Receptions and other social gatherings on church property associated with sacramental celebrations must adhere to the directives for mask-wearing and social distancing outlined in this document. It is not recommended that food be served at such events. Masking should be utilized for all group photos.

### **BAPTISM:**

27. During the course of the pandemic, infant baptisms may be celebrated or delayed at the discretion of the pastor.
28. The anointing with the Oil of Catechumens and *ephphatha* rite may be omitted.
29. 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.
30. It is practical at this time to avoid baptism by immersion. In baptism by pouring, the blessed water should not be taken from the same receptacle where water from a previous baptism has been poured.

### **HOLY COMMUNION:**

31. Communion may be brought to the homebound at any time.
32. During the time that the obligation to attend Sunday Mass is abrogated, it may be helpful to encourage reception of Holy Communion at weekday Masses instead of on Sundays.

33. A priest is not free to deny reception of Holy Communion to someone who desires sincerely to receive on the tongue. Should a priest have any personal concern about this, it would be best that he delegate that responsibility to a Deacon or to an Extraordinary Minister. The priest is certainly free to express his opinion that it is safer for him to give Communion to those who wish to receive on the hand and even to encourage the faithful in this direction if he wishes.
34. First Communions may be celebrated at the Sunday parish Mass or at another Mass. Parishes may choose to spread First Communions over several Masses based on the number of participants.
35. Holy Communion is distributed to the faithful under the species of bread only. This applies also to First Communions.

**CONFIRMATION:**

36. Parishes may choose to spread Confirmations over several dates based on the number of participants. Please contact the Archbishop's office for information about scheduling.
37. Anointing with oil on the forehead: it is advisable for the bishop or priest to sanitize his hands after each anointing using an alcohol-based wipe. Alternately, an instrument (e.g. a cotton swab) may be used for anointing. Such instruments should be burned or buried after use.

**RCIA:**

38. Virtual or in-person meetings may be used for RCIA preparation or mystagogical reflection.
39. If initiation was delayed due to the pandemic, pastors may determine an appropriate day and time for celebrating the sacraments of initiation for Elect and Candidates for Full Communion who would have entered the Church at the Easter Vigil. If a parish has multiple Elect and Candidates, they may all be initiated at the same liturgy or at different times, as circumstances suggest.
40. As far as possible, the sacraments of initiation are to be celebrated on a Sunday, using, as occasion suggests, the Sunday Mass or one of the Ritual Masses: "Christian Initiation: Baptism." If circumstances suggest, initiation may occur outside of the Sunday Mass. We cannot and should not attempt a re-creation of the Easter Vigil, since the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* offers provisions for extraordinary circumstances.
41. Candidates for full Communion: Candidates may be received into full Communion any Sunday of the year. The Lectionary advises that "readings, responsorial psalms, and verses before the Gospel may be taken in whole or in part from the Mass of the Day, or from the Mass for the Unity of Christians (#867-871), or from the Mass for Christian Unity (# 751-755), or from the following" (cf. # 761-763).

**RECONCILIATION:**

42. Priest and penitent must be positioned at least three feet apart in a safe, soundproof space.

**ANOINTING OF THE SICK and MINISTRY TO HOMEBOUND:**

- 43. Priests may anoint the sick in non-emergency situations, make visits to the sick and homebound, and distribute Holy Communion to these individuals.
- 44. Policies in place at hospitals and other facilities are to be followed at all times, even if these are more restrictive than Archdiocesan guidelines.

**WEDDINGS and FUNERALS:**

- 45. Follow the same social-distancing and other directives as for Mass. Consideration should be given to live-streaming if the church cannot accommodate the number of guests who wish to attend.

Please contact the Office of Worship with questions 502-471-2128 or [worship@archlou.org](mailto:worship@archlou.org).