



## MEMO

## OFFICE OF WORSHIP AND THE CATECHUMENATE

Date: 19 May 2021  
To: Priests and Deacons  
Fr: Father Marty Dobrzynski *M. J. Dobrzynski*  
Re: Updated Liturgical Guidelines

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** Parishes should begin planning **now** for how to organize worship space to accommodate both vaccinated and unvaccinated in light of the new CDC masking guidelines. Parishes can anticipate another update no later than June 15.

Since the resumption of public worship in May of 2020 the vigilance of pastors and parish communities in adhering to, and reasonably adapting, the original protocols issued at that time has enabled the faithful to return to regular Sunday Masses and weekday Masses and the other sacraments so that we might better be prepared to witness Christ's return in our service of neighbor and at His final coming.

The herculean effort on the part of every priest, parish staff member, hospitality minister, liturgical lay minister, and so many others has enabled the people of God to resume weekly worship in a safe and fulfilling manner.

The prayers of all the faithful for an easing of this pandemic and the development of a vaccine have placed the Church into a new era in dealing with assemblies and the threat of COVID-19. Over the past several months many pastors have adopted reasonable adjustments to the May 2020 protocols. Such adaptations have been based on continued studies regarding the virus and the prudent reopening up of public gatherings in the State of Indiana.

There is no one study that can determine how the Church should move forward to a greater sense of normalcy. Many scientific studies over the past several months need to be weighed as a whole -- along with appropriate input from public health officials and governmental regulations -- in order to provide direction as this pandemic is better understood and brought under control.

The protocols in the attached document are designed to help parishes move toward a normalization of the celebration of Mass, daily and on the Lord's Day as well as the celebration of the sacraments. Each parish is a bit different from their neighbors in matters of physical layout of worship space, the makeup of parishioners and the sensibilities of pastoral leadership. These protocols are an invitation to reframe the approach to public worship in light of recent actions taken by public health officials and the weight of many studies conducted over the past year.

## Updated Guidelines for Celebrating Eucharist May 19, 2021

1. **Masks need to be continued to be worn by all at public worship indoors.** General screening of all liturgical ministers should continue. No one should be in church that is ill or feeling ill or less than 10 days after being diagnosed with COVID-19.
2. **Beginning on Trinity Sunday, May 30th, parishes may increase their seating capacity** by reducing the distance between family groups to three feet. Each parish should take the time to prepare parishioners by educating them on the importance of continuing to wear a mask, and sanitize their hands, as they enter, and before receiving communion as the distance is lessened. Parishes may retain some section(s) for six-foot distancing.
3. **The goal is to return to an open-door policy regarding Sunday and weekday masses.** Parishes should evaluate the need for a reservation system if they are able to utilize the three-foot metric for seating.
4. **The detailed sanitizing of the worship space after each mass can be reasonably scaled back.** Pews tops (the place where most people touch) can be quickly wiped down using a simple soap and water solution after each mass or even after two or three masses.
5. **The liturgical roles of Reader, Altar Server, and Extraordinary Ministers of the Holy Communion should begin to be reinstated.**
6. **The role of a choir and Cantor can be reinstated.** Parishes should consider available space and make-up of the choir. For now, choir members are to be masked when they sing and separated by three feet or have individual Plexiglas screens. The cantor may be unmasked for those parts of the liturgy when they are leading the assembly and be set 16 feet away from other members of the assembly.
7. **Hymnals or Missalettes may be returned to pews if desired.** It is recommended that congregants be allowed to each have one for themselves that they are responsible to bring to Mass where this is convenient. Recyclable worship aids for the faithful are recommended. Such worship aids can also help in communicating safety protocols and liturgical directions for the assembly.
8. **The entrance procession should be reinstated.**
9. **The offertory procession may be reinstated.** Those bringing the gifts forward should be instructed to sanitize their hands before they touch the gifts or they should wear gloves. The cruets, chalices, bowls, etc. should be covered. For the offertory collection it is recommended to use baskets on handles not individual baskets or parishioners may place their offerings in baskets at entrances of the Church.
10. **Continue to limit physical contact during the Lord's Prayer and exchange of peace.**
11. **The Communion procession should be reinstated.** It may be helpful for processions in small churches to come from the side aisle and return by the main aisle. All should continue to sanitize hands immediately prior to the distribution of Holy Communion. The distribution of the Precious Blood remains restricted, to the celebrant and concelebrants.
12. **Communion of the tongue is to be permitted.** A priest is not free to deny Holy Communion to someone who desires sincerely to receive on the tongue. However, it is acceptable to inform congregants who wish to receive in this fashion that, they are asked to come forward at the end of the communion line or to direct them to use a separate communion line. It is suggested that where distribution on the tongue takes place some form of sanitizer be prepared such as, a purificator and a small bowl of grain alcohol be prepared for the minister to dip thumb and forefinger and wipe his fingers between each communicant. Should a priest have any personal concern about this, he may delegate this responsibility to a Deacon or to an Extraordinary Minister.
13. **The recessional may be reinstated,** especially if the church has more than one exit. If it has only one exit it might still be advantageous to dismiss section at a time.
14. **Holy water stoups and baptismal fonts may again be filled and used, at the discretion of the pastor.** Stoups should be emptied, cleaned, and refilled at least each weekend.
15. **Signage for returning congregants should be updated** to reflect these revised protocols. Signage should include  
1) the need to wear masks while in church. 2) The need to sanitize hands when entering and before receiving communion. 4) Any instructions for the seating of congregants.

## Updated Guidelines for Celebrating the Sacraments & Other Considerations May 19, 2021

1. **The sacraments of Initiation may be conferred following the basic guidelines as for Eucharist.** Baptisms should resume in a normal fashion. If more than one infant is baptized then the celebrant should sanitize their thumb between each anointing.
2. **Weddings should no longer be delayed and should resume in the usual fashion.** Bridal parties can remove their mask for the opening procession but should put them on when they reach their seat. During the vows the bride and groom can remove their masks for their promises, vows and exchange of rings and if at the conclusion of the liturgy the bride (and groom) go to the Marian shrine. The celebrant, at his discretion, may remove his mask at these times if the couple is comfortable with him doing so. The bridal party may remove their masks for the recessional. Bride and groom can receive from one chalice, which is separate from the celebrant's chalice.
3. **Funerals should resume in the usual fashion with the exception of the main party of the assembly being seated before Mass begins.** When the church is large enough to accommodate it, the immediate family may accompany the body of the deceased to the altar and then take their seats. Masks should be worn by all in attendance following the basic protocols for Eucharist.
4. **Anointing of the Sick should proceed in the normal fashion** with the priest sanitizing his thumb after each anointing. If a patient is COVID positive and the priest is uncomfortable in anointing such a patient, they should find a priest who is willing to administer the sacrament or contact the Vicar for Clergy Fr. Jon Plavcan for assistance in finding a priest.
5. **The Sacrament of Penance can return to the usual confessional** room unless the pastor deems it far too small and lacking in ventilation. Both the penitent and the priest should be masked. Face to face confession can be administered at the pastor's discretion.