

**THESE LITURGICAL GUIDELINES REPLACE THE LITURGICAL GUIDANCE PROVIDED IN THE
EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS INSTRUCTION MANUAL, EFFECTIVE MAY 28, 2021.**

**Per the Governor of Virginia's Executive Order 79 (effective May 28, 2021),
public health restrictions have ended in the Commonwealth, apart from
continued guidance on mask wearing.**

I. GUIDELINES FOR ALL LITURGICAL CELEBRATIONS

Masks – Fully Vaccinated. Effective May 15, 2021, fully vaccinated people no longer need to wear a mask in any setting. In addition, fully vaccinated people do not need to supply proof of vaccination; parishes should not ask to see or check vaccination cards.

Masks – Unvaccinated. All present for the liturgy ages 5 and older must cover their mouth and nose with a mask when present for any Mass or liturgical celebration. Masks include disposable, surgical masks that are worn on one occasion. Individuals who cannot wear a mask due to health reasons must speak directly with their pastor to receive an exception. Documentation of the medical need is not required.

- **Priests.** All priests should follow the mask guidance for those fully vaccinated and those unvaccinated. All priests wearing a mask during any public Mass and other gatherings should wear the mask during any time when he is not speaking. This would include, and is not limited to, processing and recessing, during the Liturgy of the Word when others are proclaiming readings, during musical selections, and for distribution of Holy Communion.
- **Deacons.** All deacons should follow the mask guidance for those fully vaccinated and those unvaccinated. All deacons wearing a mask during any public Mass and other gatherings should wear the mask during any time when he is not speaking. This would include, and is not limited to, processing and recessing, during the Liturgy of the Word when others are proclaiming readings, during musical selections, and for distribution of Holy Communion.
- **Lectors.** Lectors should follow the mask guidance for those fully vaccinated and those unvaccinated. If a lector is wearing a mask, during the proclamation of the reading(s), the lector may remove his/her mask to proclaim the reading but should return the mask after they conclude the reading.
- **Cantor.** Cantors should follow the mask guidance for those fully vaccinated and those unvaccinated. If a cantor is wearing a mask, a cantor may remove his/her mask when he/she is singing but return the mask after he/she concludes singing.
- **Ushers.** Ushers should follow the mask guidance for those fully vaccinated and those unvaccinated.

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- **Altar Servers.** Altar servers should follow the mask guidance for those fully vaccinated and those unvaccinated. The recommendation to suspend the ministry of altar servers was removed effective April 1, 2021; parishes may resume this ministry at the discretion of the pastor.
- **Lay faithful, including religious sisters and seminarians.** The lay faithful, including religious sisters and seminarians, who are 5- years of age or older as well as those receiving Holy Communion must wear a mask during public Mass and other gatherings based on their vaccinated status, *i.e.*, fully vaccinated individuals do not need to wear a mask. Anyone who is 5- years of age or older who is not vaccinated must wear a mask.

Hand sanitizer.

Parishes are encouraged to continue the practice of offering hand sanitizer. All present are encouraged to use hand sanitizer, when it is available.

Inviting parishioners to attend liturgical celebrations.

Parishes should no longer need a plan to invite parishioners to attend liturgical celebrations, *e.g.*, online registration system, etc., as public health restrictions have ended effective May 28, 2021, including social distancing.

Flyer for church doors.

Parishes should include flyers on church doors indicating that fully vaccinated individuals are not required to wear masks, but those who are unvaccinated are required to cover their mouth and nose with a mask.

Usher's functions at liturgical celebrations.

The Usher's functions at liturgical celebrations may return to pre-COVID-19 customs and practices at the parish. For example, the usher **no longer** needs to ask households questions before entering the space where liturgical celebrations are celebrated; take temperatures; seat people socially distanced; monitor the capacity limit, as there is no longer a limit; direct people to exit the space when liturgical celebrations conclude, etc.

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Music Ministry.

- Choirs may resume as of May 28, 2021.
- Instrumentals. Parishes may resume the use of any additional instrumentals, which includes strings, percussion, brass, and/or wind instruments. **However, if wind or brass instruments are incorporated into the music ministry at a liturgical celebration, these instrumentalists should maintain social distancing of 10 feet, as mentioned in Executive Order 79.**
- Hymnals and/or paper worship aids. Parishes may resume the use of hymnals and/or resume/continue the use of paper worship aids.

Nursery and cry rooms.

Parishes may resume the use of a cry room and nursery with attention to proper cleaning.

Outdoor or parking lot liturgical celebrations.

With social distancing restrictions lifted, all liturgical celebrations should occur in the church and not outside or in a parking lot, including, *e.g.*, Mass, Adoration, Benediction, Sacrament of Reconciliation, Distribution of Communion outside of Mass or after Mass celebrated inside the church and/or other secondary space, etc.

II. GUIDELINES FOR THE CELEBRATION OF MASS

Dispensation from the obligation to attend Mass.

Though capacity limits for liturgies is lifted effective May 28, 2021 and those fully vaccinated may attend liturgical celebrations without a mask, some members of the faithful may not feel comfortable at liturgical celebrations with unmasked attendees or their attendance may be challenging due to conditions set forth in the existing Executive Order (*e.g.*, fully vaccinated parents whose children must wear masks who are over the age of 5 and/or unvaccinated), Bishop Knestout continues to dispense all of the faithful of the Diocese of Richmond from the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and holy days until further notice.

Daily Mass schedule.

Parishes should consider resuming their regular, pre-COVID-19 Mass schedule.

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Designated “Mask Required” Mass

Depending on the circumstances of a parish community, there may be some individuals uncomfortable returning to Mass at which fully vaccinated individuals not wearing a mask are present. A pastor—in consultation with his staff and councils—is invited to consider setting aside a Mass at which all in attendance—vaccinated or unvaccinated—are required to wear a mask. Further, if deemed necessary to designate a Mass as “Masks required for all in attendance,” this Mass may also occur during the week and use the Sunday readings/Mass settings.

Time between each Mass | Cleaning and Sanitizing the liturgical space(s).

The sliding scale regarding the minimum time between Masses was lifted effective April 1, 2021. While cleaning and sanitizing between each Mass is no longer required, parishes are encouraged to continue cleaning the church building and pews with regularity, similar to the practice(s) before COVID-19.

Children’s Liturgy of the Word.

Parishes may resume the Children’s Liturgy of the Word.

More than one priest present for Mass.

Priests should receive under both species with a separate paten and chalice for each priest. If there is a single chalice, all of the priests should receive communion by intinction.

Distribution of Holy Communion.

1. Priest, deacons, seminarians, and lay ministers may distribute communion during the Mass.
2. If desired, a priest, deacon, seminarian, and lay minister may wear a mask for the distribution of communion, However, all who distribute communion must follow the mask guidance above for those fully vaccinated and those unvaccinated. Those distributing communion should sanitize their hands before distributing communion.
3. Parishes should remove any table(s) used by a minister to stand behind for the distribution of communion.
4. Plexiglass sneeze guards should be removed.
5. The unvaccinated wearing a mask during Mass must come forward wearing their mask, *e.g.*, the communicant should not remove his/her mask, exit his/her pew, and move forward in the communion line to receive communion without a mask.

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Distribution of the cup.

The distribution of the cup remains suppressed for deacons and the lay faithful until further notice. If a deacon desires to receive under both species, he should consult with the pastor concerning the option of the priest communicating to the deacon using intinction.

Additional specifics during the celebration of Mass.

Offertory. Parishes may resume the passing of the baskets for the collection, or may continue to suppress the passing of baskets for the collection. If suppressed, parishes may continue to place the basket(s) at the front of the church for the faithful to place their offertory in immediately before stepping forward to receive communion or place a basket at the exit of the church for people to utilize as they exit the church after Mass, with an Usher nearby to monitor the basket.

Procession of the offertory and gifts of bread and wine. Parishes may resume the procession of the offertory and gifts of bread and wine. However, parishes may also continue to place on the altar the items necessary for the Liturgy of the Eucharist before Mass begins, as has become the recent practice or placed on the credence table in the sanctuary and brought forward to the altar at the appropriate time.

Lord's Prayer and Sign of Peace. Parishes are to continue the practice of refraining from holding hands during the Lord's Prayer and shaking hands during the Sign of Peace (bow or verbal gesture is appropriate).

Bulletins. Parish may resume the use of printed bulletins. It is recommended that Ushers distribute these items and sanitize their hands before distributing bulletins.

III. CARING FOR THE FAITHFUL UNABLE TO ATTEND MASS

Livestreaming/recorded Masses.

Parishes are encouraged to continue livestreaming/recording Mass for the faithful unable to attend, *e.g.*, those who have not yet received a vaccine; those uncomfortable returning to Mass with unmasked attendees; etc.

Any event (public Mass, worship event, etc.) that is being livestreamed and includes individuals of the general public must give advanced notice that the livestream will be occurring. This includes Masses that are livestreamed within the same diocesan facility. The following language (or an

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appropriate adaptation) must be provide so as to give advance notice to your community via channels such as on-site signage and announcements, website and/or other digital media accounts.

Due to COVID-19, Mass is being live streamed for use on various Diocesan digital media accounts of the Catholic Diocese of Richmond, including, but not limited to, the websites of the Catholic Diocese of Richmond and The Catholic Virginian, and social media platforms of the Catholic Diocese of Richmond. Photography and/or screenshot images from the livestream may be used for The Catholic Virginian print edition. If you do not wish to be captured by live streaming, please refrain from attending that particular Mass time.

Posted homilies and recordings. Priests are encouraged to continue posting written or video-taped homilies and reflections from the readings of the Mass of the Day on the parish website.

Prayers for communion by desire. Parishes may wish to continue to provide prayers for communion by desire, as some members of the faithful, *e.g.*, those who have not yet received a vaccine; those uncomfortable returning to Mass with unmasked attendees; etc, may not feel comfortable attending Mass at this time.

IV. GUIDELINES FOR USE OF CHURCH BUILDINGS

Gatherings.

Effective May 28, 2021, there are no gathering limits before or after Mass.

Blessed Sacrament in the church.

Parishes are encouraged to retain the practice of the tabernacle in the main body of the church. However, after consultation with the parish staff and councils, the tabernacle and/or Blessed Sacrament may return to reservation chapels (if the parish's custom pre-COVID-19 was the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament in a reservation chapel).

Restroom usage.

Parishes are no longer required to limit restroom usage.

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Baptismal fonts and holy water.

Parish baptismal and holy water fonts—those with running water (living water) or still (non-moving water)—may be filled and used at this time at the discretion of the pastor. Parishes should clean and disinfect the font(s) following their practice(s) in place pre-COVID-19.

V. GUIDELINES FOR OTHER LITURGICAL AND SACRAMENTAL CELEBRATIONS

Distribution of Holy Communion.

Holy Communion may not be distributed outside of a public Mass except when in the context of:

1. Administering the Anointing of the Sick
2. Viaticum accompanying the Last Rites
3. Visiting the sick or homebound, as outlined in section VI.

Baptisms.

An instrument is no longer required for the anointing(s) during the Sacrament of Baptism. However, similar to Anointing of the Sick, when anointing the individual, a new, unused instrument **may** be used for each individual baptized. Any used instruments should be discarded by burning them; parishes are, therefore, discouraged from using cotton swabs with plastic sticks.

Weddings.

All those in attendance at a wedding should follow the mask guidance for those fully vaccinated and those unvaccinated. For those unvaccinated, during weddings, the following adaptations may be used at the discretion of the pastor or administrator:

- The bride and her parent(s) is(are) not required to wear a mask when she processes down the aisle at the beginning of the wedding.
- While the bride and groom must wear a mask during the entire wedding liturgy except where outlined above, the bride and groom may remove their mask for the Rite of Marriage (*e.g.*, consent, reciting their vows, exchange of rings, etc.).
- Wedding pictures may be taken inside the Church where those in the pictures are not required to wear masks. In this instance, all individuals not taking pictures should exit the Church before masks are removed and masks must be worn by those in pictures when their picture is not being taken or while they are waiting to take their picture. Pictures outside are permitted without masks for the wedding party and family.

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First Holy Communion.

If pictures are taken with groups of non-related first communion candidates, masks must be worn. However, individual pictures may be taken with the pastor and the first communion candidate without masks at the pastor's discretion.

Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Individual reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation is available and no longer needs to maintain social distancing; parishes may return to their pre-COVID-19 customs and practices for the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Holy Hours of Adoration with Exposition.

Parishes may resume the celebration of Holy Hours of Adoration with Exposition for the lay faithful following the parish's pre-COVID-19 customs and practices.

Eucharistic Processions on the Solemnity of Corpus Christi.

Some parishes in the Diocese conclude a Mass on the Solemnity of Corpus Christi with a Eucharistic Procession; parishes are permitted to do so. Parishes concluding Mass on the Solemnity of Corpus Christi with a Eucharistic Procession are reminded to consult the *Ceremonial of Bishops* (CB), §387-394, and *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass* (HCWE), §101-108.

Parishes are reminded to take note of HCWE, §101, 102, 104 and CB, §392 & 393, which speak of the processions occurring outside of the church space.

VI. PASTORAL CARE TO THE SICK

For priests to be available to those in need, they must be accessible by a reliable phone number that they are answering and checking for messages regularly each day. Pastors and Administrators should check their parish's after-hours voicemail to ensure that their emergency number is current and easily available to those in need. Special care should be made, as is the expectation at all times, to make sure that priests are attentive and responsive to all calls for pastoral care.

Out of a continued abundance of caution, it is advisable that priests, deacons, seminarians, or lay extraordinary ministers of holy communion contact the sick/homebound individual to ensure their comfort with receiving a visit and/or communion and/or anointing by the priest. Pastors are

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encouraged to ask pastoral care ministers and volunteers to call and correspond with this population frequently. The homebound should be encouraged to view livestream Masses, if available; make a Spiritual Communion; and be kept in prayer at parish Masses.

Parishioners who are facing surgery or who have been recently hospitalized should be anointed and receive Communion if they are properly disposed.

When visiting the sick, priests, deacons, seminarians, and lay ministers should ensure that they are in good health and observe safe hygiene for the safety of themselves and the person(s) they are visiting. If a priest is not healthy or shows initial signs of illness, he is obliged to ask for the assistance of a neighboring priest to assist with answering the call, particularly if the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick is necessary.

In the event a priest is asked to anoint someone with COVID-19, the Code of Canon Law permits the use of an instrument (Cann. 1000, §2), for example, a cotton swab. In such case, the used instrument should not come in contact again with the oil stock and should be disposed of in a reverent manner like one would with any swab placed in an oil stock. In case of necessity, a single anointing on the forehead or on any other appropriate part of the body with the entire sacramental form (“Through this holy anointing... May the Lord who frees you from sin...”) suffices (Cann. 1000, §1; PCS, 23). Vaccinated priests do not need to quarantine after visiting someone with COVID-19.

If a faithful who is infirm, elderly homebound, or nursing homebound requests communion, deacons, seminarians, and lay ministers may visit the sick/homebound and are permitted to distribute communion to the sick/homebound using their discretion and prudential judgement.

Those bringing communion to or visiting the sick/homebound are encouraged to exercise caution, for example, even if vaccinated, consider wearing a mask while visiting the sick/homebound or bringing communion.