

# REVISED GUIDELINES FOR PARISH LIFE IN THE CONTEXT OF COVID-19

## **Guidelines for the Celebration of Mass**

- The general dispensation from the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation will remain in effect at this time.
- Parishioners who are fully vaccinated are not required to wear a face mask at Mass.
- Children under the age of 12 who are not vaccine eligible and those under the age of 16 who have not been vaccinated, may accompany and be seated with a vaccinated adult.
- All who prefer to continue wearing facial covering and social distancing are free to do so.
- Those who are not fully vaccinated should observe social distancing of six feet from individuals not in their household. They are to wear a face mask at Mass except when receiving Holy Communion.
- Even if vaccinated, we ask you to stay six feet away from others who are wearing a mask at Mass.
- It is no longer necessary to block off every other row of pews. Parishioners may be seated in a staggered fashion while respecting six feet of social distance, where required.
- Deacons, lectors, servers, and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion may resume their duties in the celebration of Mass. In the case of servers, this may not necessarily include all their former responsibilities. However, parishes are strongly encouraged to invite servers back to ministry.
- A cantor is permitted, and small choirs may resume.
- Weekday Masses should continue in the main church, rather than in a chapel.
- Ministers of Hospitality (greeters) and ushers may resume their duties but should not make physical contact with parishioners until the percentage of vaccinated persons increases.
- Priests, deacons, lectors, servers, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, ushers and sacristans should continue to follow prescribed handwashing and sanitizing practices.
- Offertory collections with baskets may be resumed by ushers. They should not make physical contact with parishioners.
- The Sign of Peace is optional and there should be no physical contact.
- Holy Communion should be distributed in the traditional manner and at the normal time. While in the Communion line, communicants should maintain social distancing from those not in their household.
- At this time, the Precious Blood should not be distributed to the faithful.

## **Guidelines for the Church Building and Liturgical Objects**

- Because it has been demonstrated that the danger of contracting COVID from surfaces is less than previously thought, parishes should focus on sanitizing bathrooms and other high traffic or high touch areas (e.g., light switches and doorknobs) rather than trying to sanitize the entire church after each Mass. Each church should be sanitized and cleaned daily.
- All Communion vessels should be properly cleaned after Mass with hot, soapy water (after being purified according to the rubrics).
- Hand sanitizer should be available at all church entrances and in the Sanctuary where it can easily be used by celebrants, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, and others serving or attending Mass.
- Holy Water fonts should remain empty at this time. Baptismal fonts should remain empty when not celebrating the Sacrament of Baptism.
- Parishes may use worship aids (e.g., missalettes, hymnals). All who use such aides should sanitize their hands at they enter the church.
- Bulletins may be distributed at Mass and may also be distributed electronically.

## **Sacramental and Parish Life**

- Weddings and funerals should be held.
- Baptism should continue. Clean water must be used for each individual Baptism.
- Parishes should hold regular Confessions. If confessionals have insufficient space or ventilation, another location in the Church may be used, respecting both privacy and social distancing requirements, where required.
- Anointing of the Sick should be done with utmost care, following the protocols specified on the Thomistic Institute website.
- Visits to the homebound for Communion should resume with proper caution. Further, visits to parishioners and nursing homes should resume, respecting the protocols in place in those institutions (masks still required in nursing homes, healthcare facilities, schools, public transit, homeless shelters, correctional facilities)
- Churches should be open for visitation, and Eucharistic Adoration may resume, using appropriate precautions and observing social distancing, where appropriate.
- Parish group activities may resume, including Bible studies, prayer groups, pastoral council meetings, and finance council meetings, following appropriate protocols.
- Faith Formation classes should continue following the established protocols.
- Volunteers are encouraged to resume serving in parishes.
- All parish offices should continue to follow the protocols in place.

You will be provided with updates as circumstances dictate. Thank you for your patient support.