



ARCHDIOCESE OF NEWARK

Updated Directives for Parish Liturgical Celebrations During the Covid 19 Pandemic
September 24, 2020

Thank you for all you have done and are doing to continue to reach out to the faithful and keep people connected to their parish community. Many creative approaches have been taking place from livestreamed Masses and other devotions, along with virtual meetings, online religious education, and catching up with sacraments. It has been inspiring to see all that you have been able to do in a short time and so creatively.

As we approach Fall 2020, we are still living with the Covid 19 virus and probably will be for a while. Most parishes have resumed weekday and Sunday Masses as well as funerals and sacramental celebrations. **All of this with limited capacity, meaning no more than 150 persons or 25% of the church's total capacity for social distancing.** It is essential that we follow these distancing guidelines to quell the spread of the virus.

Although we would like to see a full return to parish and liturgical life, we must be patient, stay safe and avoid transmission of the virus. One of the most difficult sacrifices for Catholics during this time of pandemic has been the suspension of most sacramental celebrations, especially the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. The faithful hunger for the Body of Christ and the other Sacraments; pastors of souls yearn for the presence of Christ found in the gathering of God's holy people. While we are eager to fully return to our churches, we must continue the ways we have been safe and prudent for these many months.

We commend our pastors, staff and volunteers who have so diligently worked to prepare their churches to welcome parishioners to liturgical celebrations. It has not been an easy to gather adequate supplies, rearrange seating, tape 6 ft distances on the floors and so much more. In the true spirit of our energetic and faith-filled parishes, we have accomplished great things.

We thank all who persevered in faith and charity during these times of challenge, offering live streaming of your liturgy and prayer life and the many other creative ways you have reached out to your people and kept connected. We urge you to continue such practices as necessary until we can safely return to full, active participation in parish life.

UPDATED GUIDELINES

These guidelines are updated and continue to apply to all churches and places of public worship, even those not in a parochial setting, i.e. chapels, oratories, and any other space to be used for public worship. Religious communities may celebrate the Mass as is their custom provided the priest presiding meets safe criteria. If participants are present from outside the community, these guidelines must be observed.

Dispensation for Sunday Mass

Cardinal Tobin continues to dispense the faithful from the obligation to attend Mass on Sunday.

Preparing for Worship Celebrations

1. At this time, public celebrations of liturgies, devotions, or other group prayer are permitted following restrictions on strict seating capacity of 25% of the worship space or maximum 150 persons at any given time depending on the size of the church to ensure social distancing and safety.
2. In accord with national, state and local health directives, those who show symptoms of COVID-19, who have been exposed to an infected person, or who have traveled to unsafe places listed on the [CDC.gov](https://www.cdc.gov) website, are not permitted to enter the church for 14 days. It is recommended that before Mass, everyone should check their temperature at home before coming to church.
 - Those who are at risk because of an underlying health issue are strongly encouraged to avoid the risks posed by attendance at public celebrations of the Mass.
 - Parishes will continue to livestream the Mass, so that those unable to attend may maintain a spiritual connection with their local parish.
3. Parish staff members must be physically present in the church to welcome parishioners and ensure social distancing and sanitizing. Staff, ushers or other volunteers should direct people to specifically marked pews. As previously indicated, attendance will be limited to ensure compliance with social distancing requirements.
4. Parishes should have a method in place to register for a particular Mass which also allows for contact tracing.
5. The pastor will ensure that there is prominent notification within the church regarding the requirement of masks and social distancing. Masks must be properly worn by all individuals while in the church.
6. Six feet of distance must be maintained between households and individuals attending liturgy. Alternating pews should be blocked off. Others may be necessary because of the particular layout of each church.
7. Holy water fonts must remain empty until further notice.
8. Hand sanitizer should be made available throughout the church and encourage parishioners to bring their own hand sanitizer.

Sacrament of Reconciliation

The Sacrament of Reconciliation can be offered at specified and limited times.

- Confessionals are not to be used.
- Social distancing must be maintained by those waiting for the sacrament and attention be given to maintaining the seal.
- Masks must be worn by confessor and penitent.

Sanitizing of the Church

1. Appropriate cleaning of high-use areas within the church should be done before each service. It is desirable that the pews used by participants be wiped down before Mass.
2. Pews, door handles and knobs, restrooms and high traffic areas of the church should be wiped down and sanitized at regular intervals with the removal of trash and other items from the pews.
3. All hymnals and missalettes should be removed from the pews and stored for the duration of the pandemic. No other materials may be left in the pews. The faithful are encouraged to bring their own liturgical resources for use during the celebration of Mass. If feasible, parishes may project hymns and responses on screens.

During the Liturgy

1. The faithful must wear a mask to enter the church and during the celebration of Mass.
2. Ushers and other volunteers must wear masks throughout the celebration of Mass. Pastors are obliged to ensure that these obligations are enforced without exception. Those at the altar are to wear a mask if distributing Holy Communion.
3. Presiders or Lectors while performing their speaking function do not require masks to be worn as long as they are more than six feet away from the assembly.
4. Clergy and staff may greet parishioners as they enter and leave the church while wearing a mask, with no physical contact such as a handshake or hug and maintaining six-foot distancing.
5. Information should be provided before the celebration regarding social distancing, the collection, the form of the Sign of Peace and the manner of receiving Communion.
6. All ministers, including music ministers and choir members, must maintain six-foot social distancing.
7. The entrance/recession procession should be done only if social distancing can be maintained.
8. The procession at the Preparation of the Gifts is suspended. Collection baskets (or any other materials) are not to be passed from one family to another, nor shall ushers take up the collection from the congregation. Instead, fixed baskets are to be used for

donations from the assembly and should be monitored by the ushers until the donations are collected and handled according to the proper protocols.

9. There must be no physical contact during the sign of peace. A simple gesture, such as a bow or nod, is recommended.
10. It is recommended that separate chalices be prepared for each concelebrating priest and/or deacon.
11. Priests or deacons who are in at-risk groups are permitted to refrain from distributing Holy Communion and may delegate distribution to other Communion ministers.
12. For the distribution of Communion, ushers or other volunteers who are masked will ensure six-foot distancing in the Communion line. Floor markings may be placed six feet apart in the aisles to facilitate proper social distancing in all directions during Communion.
13. Communion ministers must be masked and sanitize their hands immediately before and after distributing Communion. Ministers should avoid physical contact when placing the host in the communicant's hands.
14. Holy Communion is only permitted in the hand. Distribution of Holy Communion from the chalice is prohibited to the assembly. For those who are gluten intolerant, special arrangements are to be made with the pastor.
15. Ushers or ministers of hospitality should assist in maintaining a single-file line during the distribution of Holy Communion in order for each Communion minister and communicant to maintain social distancing in all directions. Multiple Communion ministers may be used, provided one-way traffic patterns are observed.
16. When approaching the Communion minister, the communicant should make a slight bow of the head, receive the host in the hand, step to the side, lift his/her mask and consume the host, and return to their seat.
17. Those who refrain from receiving communion still unite themselves with the sacrifice of Christ. Non-communicants are kindly asked to remain in their places rather than coming forward to request a blessing.

After Mass

1. Families and individuals should leave the church in an organized manner wearing masks and observing six feet of distance between other households. Ushers or ministers of hospitality may need to direct this process.
2. Ushers are not to hand out bulletins or other materials.
3. Clergy and other ministers may greet parishioners as they exit the church only if they are masked, maintain social distancing and avoid physical contact.

4. There are to be no receptions or social gatherings (e.g., coffee and doughnuts) following Mass.
5. It is desirable that pews and other high-traffic areas of the church be wiped down before the next service, with the removal of any trash and other items from the pews.

BAPTISMS

Baptisms are resumed as long as all of the directives concerning limitations on attendance, social distancing and wearing masks properly are observed.

1. Parishes should be sure to limit numbers of attendees as in the current directives.
2. Fonts are to remain empty until further notice. Water should be blessed in a separate receptacle (such as a large pitcher) and poured over each candidate.
3. Anointings may be done with a cotton swab. If done by hand, the minister must sanitize between each anointing.

CONFIRMATIONS AND FIRST COMMUNIONS

Confirmations and First Communions that were postponed by the directive of March 25, 2020 may be scheduled as long as all of the directives concerning limitations on attendance, social distancing and wearing masks properly are observed.

1. Cardinal Tobin has given pastors and administrators delegation to confirm children baptized as Catholics until December 31, 2020.
2. All pastors and administrators are required to review a two-part workshop provided by the Office of Divine Worship found at these links:
 - <https://youtu.be/6zh250pn0b4>
 - <https://youtu.be/qZhP0GByj4>
3. At this time, pastors/administrators and their pastoral leadership team, should determine when and how Confirmation and First Communions may be scheduled and celebrated to ensure full compliance with all the provisions listed in these Directives. All those who receive First Communion and Confirmation during the time of postponement must do so before December 31, 2020.
4. In order to comply with restricted capacity and social distancing, it is recommended that a limited number of those to receive Confirmation and First Communion be scheduled during Sunday Masses or other designated times until all have celebrated the Sacraments.
5. Catechetical programs for those scheduled to receive Confirmation and First Communion the following year should commence at the usual time respecting and complying with any provisions in effect at that time. The Catechetical Office has sent out

directives to all pastors, administrators, and PCLs regarding virtual classes until January 2021. This will be assessed during the Spring semester to see if in-person classes can resume. Please access these directives at https://rcan-my.sharepoint.com/:f/g/personal/catechetical_office_rcan_org/Es20Q1YpcVhOjnCUwLDvUUIBWaCeUM4H0KmxUkqMFfj6A?e=VrEb2o

WEDDINGS

Weddings postponed by the directive of March 25, 2020 may be scheduled and celebrated as long as all of the directives concerning limitations on attendance, social distancing and wearing masks are properly observed.

At the discretion of the pastor, the bride and groom may not be required to wear a mask. Whenever possible the bride and groom should be seated at a safe distance from the wedding party and the assembly. The ministers of the liturgy, the wedding party and the assembly must wear masks and observe social distancing for the entire wedding liturgy.

The priest should wear a mask during the exchange of vows, wedding rings, and at any other time in close proximity to the couple.

When possible, and if the couple so desires, they may receive Communion under both species from a separate chalice prepared for them.

RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (paragraphs 26-30) envisions exceptional circumstances when the normal celebration of initiation at the Easter Vigil may not take place.

During the time of delay, it is crucial that catechists, sponsors and godparents remain in contact with the catechumens and candidates.

1. At least one Scrutiny should be celebrated, either at Sunday Mass or at another time when convenient.
2. The Rites of Initiation are to be celebrated in their entirety according to RCIA, 220 ff.
3. It is not permitted to separate the Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism - Confirmation - First Eucharist) for catechumens (elect) being fully initiated.
4. The celebration of full initiation must occur at Mass on a Sunday (or Saturday evening). The Mass of the occurring Sunday is to be used. During Ordinary Time, but not on a Solemnity (e.g. The Most Holy Trinity or The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ), the Ritual Mass "Christian Initiation: Baptism" with its appropriate readings may be used.
5. The Lucernarium (the blessing of the fire and preparation of candle) and Liturgy of the Word of the Easter Vigil are unique to the Vigil and are not to be celebrated outside of the Easter Vigil itself.

Confirmation of Adult Catholics

The delegation for pastors to confirm adult (18+) baptized Catholics in 2020 has expired. The delegation will again be given for Easter Season 2021.

Reception into Full Communion

Priests may celebrate the “Reception into Full Communion” at any appropriate time during the year, preferably on a Sunday, according to RCIA, 487. Delegation to confirm is not required.

Note that the “Confirmation of Adult Catholics” and the “Reception into Full Communion” should not be done at the same liturgical celebration as the full initiation of the catechumens.

Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens

Due to the pandemic, the requirement for a full year catechumenate may be shortened for 2021 only. The Rite of Acceptance should be celebrated as soon as possible after public worship resumes, but at least six months before Easter, 2021.

For more information, please see more complete information from Fr. Armand Mantia in the addendum, pages 8-10.

PARISH MEETINGS

Pastors should use prudence when making decisions about having gatherings outside of liturgy. While any socially oriented gatherings are to be postponed, other meetings (for example, parish pastoral councils, finance councils, twelve step programs, or perhaps bereavement groups) are clearly more important. In any case directives concerning limitations on attendance, social distancing, wearing masks and sanitization must be observed. This means that all the above-mentioned protocols remain in place. Virtual meetings should continue to be considered as a viable option whenever possible.

GUIDELINES for TELEVISIONING the LITURGY

For livestreaming Masses, parishes should put up a sign at the doors of the church reminding parishioners that the Mass is a public event and being filmed for those at home. Their image and that of their family may appear on camera during the liturgy.

For more information, please see Guidelines from the USCCB at:

<https://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/the-mass/frequently-asked-questions/guidelines-for-televsioning-the-liturgy>

CONCLUSION

Again, we thank you for all that you have done in your parishes to pray with and unite your parish communities. Everyone has done an extraordinary job in continuing ministry along with your pastoral ministers in reaching out to keep prayerful communication with so many.

Any questions regarding these directives should be directed to the Worship Office.

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Rev. Armand Mantia Email: rev.armand.mantia@rcan.org



To: All RCIA Directors, Pastors/Administrators, Chaplains
From: Rev. Armand Mantia, Director of the RCIA
Re: Latest Updates
Date: September 23, 2020

The past six months have certainly been a time of trial for all of us. None of us has been unaffected by this illness, either by suffering from it ourselves, the loss of dear loved ones, or simply by having our lives turned upside down because of its fallout. This virus even accomplished something that The Romans, Napoleon, the Nazis and the Communists couldn't do: shut down churches.

Our people are hurting, they are still scared, many are out of work, countless thousands are still staying away from worship. With this happening, someone recently asked me if we should even bother attempting an RCIA process this year. The answer, naturally, is a resounding YES.

God is still calling people to a deeper life with him. Hearts are still being touched and desiring to know more about God and the Church. More than ever, we cannot fail those who are searching during this deeply disturbing time.

However, these unusual times call for an unusual response. Now is the time to put all of our creative energies to work and for each parish to re-imagine its process in a way that works for you, respecting all the Archdiocese and state directives, regulations and laws that are presently in effect. It is our paramount responsibility to keep ourselves, and those coming to us, as safe and healthy as possible.

In order to do this, many parishes have adopted a virtual on-line model for their process. Some are attempting a form of in-person meetings, and some are using a hybrid process. For this upcoming year, whatever works for your parish, works for your parish. Having said that, it must be stressed that whatever form your parish adopts this year, the RCIA process must be respected in its form. The seasons, the rituals, the rites cannot be dispensed with and must be followed, as far as possible, as if this were a normal year, according to the traditional calendar.

Many RCIA directives were sent out in March and repeated in June when the Re-Opening of Churches directive was published. When these were put together, no one expected that we would still be in this position many months later, and probably for many months to come.

Allow me to highlight what is still in effect:

Full Initiation of those who were unable to celebrate during Easter 2020.

Anyone, adults or children, who celebrated the Rite of Election during Lent of 2020 and were fully prepared and expecting Full Initiation on Easter of 2020 may be fully initiated at any Sunday/Saturday evening mass at the convenience of the parish. No further permissions/dispensations are required. All are to be fully initiated, you may NOT separate sacraments.

Adults (18+) who were seeking Confirmation.

The general delegation for pastors to confirm adult Catholics (18+) expired in August. “Two months beyond the resumption of public worship.” (Re-Opening Directives) If a parish still has adults to Confirm, delegation must now be sought from the Regional Bishop, according to our traditional practice.

Confirmation of Young People

According to the Directives, Cardinal Tobin has delegated all PASTORS to administer the Sacrament of Confirmation with their young people until December 31, 2020. No further permissions are required.

The Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumen

As is written in the Directives, “For 2020-2021 ONLY, we are dispensing with the traditional full year requirement for catechumens.” “The Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumen must be celebrated no later than 6 months prior to Easter 2021.” Practically speaking, if you have people who have already been celebrating Inquiry, not those who just called last week, and are planning to celebrate the sacraments at Easter 2021, you are required to celebrate the Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumen no later than the 3rd weekend of October 2020. Anyone beyond that date is to be prepared for the 2022 celebration.

Dismissal of Catechumens from Mass

As the general dispensation from the Sunday Mass is still in effect, and will be for some time, you cannot require your Catechumens to attend in person. Each parish may determine an effective method of Breaking Open the Word based on its own capabilities. If you are meeting in person, please remember that masking, social distancing, and disinfecting your meeting space is to be observed.

Children’s RCIA

This will require great creativity this year since all in-person Religious Education Classes are suspended until at least January. To do virtual RCIA with children, given the amount of virtual learning they are already doing in many cases, seems burdensome and counterproductive. RCIA directors and Parish DRE’s should confer and decide how best to serve the young people in their parishes. Some type of personal contact, even regular phone calls, should be considered to build up the faith of young catechumens.

The Call to Continuing Conversion and The Rite of Election 2021

As of this writing, both of these rituals are still scheduled, so please have your candidates and catechumens reserve these dates:

- The Call to Continuing Conversion, Saturday, February 20, 2021
- The Rite of Election, Sunday, February 21, 2021

What form each ritual will take is yet to be determined, so please be prepared and flexible for possible major changes from our normal process.

RCIA Directors Virtual Meeting

Our annual RCIA Directors meeting will be held virtually this year on Thursday, October 22, 2020. The time is yet to be determined, but most likely will be held in the morning with a taped re-broadcast that same evening. For us to invite you to the meeting, it is essential that we have the accurate names, parishes, and e-mail addresses, as well as a phone number for all parish RCIA Directors.

Please email this information to the

Office of Divine Worship (regina.chamberlain@rcan.org) at your earliest convenience.