



## WORSHIP DURING THE PANDEMIC 2021

### UPDATED GUIDELINES FOR Public Worship and Parish Activities

*January 29, 2021\**

*NOTE: The following updated guidelines are not intended to be an exhaustive and inclusion list. Pastors are to still adhere to Parish Plans implemented in May, 2020. The following is to highlight current updates and provide clarifications. [\*updated to include clarification on Social Gatherings – see Section III]*

#### **General Dispensation**

The dispensation from the Sunday Obligation to attend Mass is granted to all the faithful until further notice (see [Letter to the Faithful, Nov. 11, 2020](#)). All the faithful, however, have the obligation to “keep holy the Lord’s Day”, and on Sundays are encouraged to spend time in prayer, participate in a live stream of the Mass, meditate on the Lord’s Passion, Death and Resurrection, or participate in Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy. [See APPENDIX A for additional information.]

### **SECTION I**

#### **UPCOMING FEASTS/LENTEN SEASON/SPRING CONFIRMATIONS**

##### **FEAST OF ST. BLAISE/BLESSING OF THE THROATS, FEBRUARY 3, 2021**

The Pastor will determine whether he chooses to make available individual blessings of throats available, or to use the option as described in the Book of Blessings for the general blessing of throats (see below). If individual blessings are given, masks are to be worn, and the blessed candles should not touch the person’s neck.

Note that the *Book of Blessings* contains the following provision for this rite:

1628. If, for pastoral reasons, each individual cannot be blessed in the manner described in no. 1627, for example when great numbers are gathered for the blessing or when the memorial of Saint Blaise occurs on a Sunday, a priest or deacon may give the blessing to all assembled by extending hands, without the crossed candles, over the people while saying the prayer of blessing.

### **ASH WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2021**

While Ash Wednesday is not a holyday of obligation, and there is no requirement for the imposition of ashes, it is rightly observed as a celebration of high importance, and many will surely wish to participate even amid the current difficulties.

During this time of pandemic, there are two options in which to dispense ashes:

1. Distribution in the usual way prescribed: or
2. The Congregation for Divine Worship has offered a modified method of distributing the ashes, in which the formula is said only once over the ashes to be blessed, followed by sprinkling on the head, as outlined in a note from Cardinal Sarah [See Appendix].

These changes minimize the necessity of physical contact between minister and recipient and remove the need for the minister to speak while in close proximity to the recipient.

The distribution of ashes via sprinkling is a common practice in some countries but is not well known here. **Therefore, in order to prevent undue confusion, if this option is used, it is necessary to provide an explanation to the faithful, both at the Liturgy and through your Parish communications.**

It is also advised and encouraged to schedule more frequent opportunities for the Faithful to receive the Ashes. Scheduling one or two Liturgies of the Word (without Holy Communion) is permissible and could be a very good alternative to multiple Masses. [See APPENDIX for additional instruction from USCCB].

### **RITE OF ELECTION, FEBRUARY 21, 2021; WEATHER DATE FEBRUARY 28, 2021**

Rite of Election is scheduled for **two different time slots on Sunday, February 21<sup>st</sup>, St. Augustine Cathedral; Session 1 – 1:30 p.m. and Session II – 3:30 pm.** If weather is severe the back-up date is scheduled for February 28, 2021. The liturgy and procedure will

follow what has been done in years past, with modifications for seating, signing of the Book of the Elect, and congregating around the Cathedra.

- ❖ Timeslots will be assigned by the Office of the Bishop.
- ❖ Pastors/DRE's are still to submit the proper diocesan forms with the names/info for each candidate and catechumen.
- ❖ Attendance will be limited to the candidate/catechumen, godparent/sponsor, and two guests.
- ❖ There will be no group photo or reception following.

### **STATIONS OF THE CROSS**

Stations of the Cross may continue during the Lenten Season following the current diocesan guidelines. A priest, deacon or lay person may conduct the prayer service. Servers should not be used.

### **CONFIRMATIONS, SPRING 2021**

In honor of the Diocesan 50<sup>th</sup> Jubilee Year, all Confirmations will be celebrated at the newly rededicated St. Augustine Cathedral, Mother Church of the Diocese. Confirmations will be scheduled by Collaborative/Deanery, with one to two per week taking place beginning during the Lenten season and extending through the end of June. The process of submitting names of Confirmandi and letters to the Office of the Bishop will remain.

## **SECTION II LITURGY AND WORSHIP GUIDELINES**

**Notable updates include the following: permitted use of one to two Altars servers; use of Extraordinary Eucharistic Ministers; clarifications to Sacramental Preparation Programs and Catechetical instructions. Please review those appropriate sections for more detailed information.**

### **Celebration of the Holy Mass**

- ❖ Holy Water fonts should remain empty.

- ❖ Place a stand at the chair, or even on the altar, to hold the Missal for the presidential prayers instead of having a deacon hold the Missal.
- ❖ A separate chalice is to be provided for the celebrant and each concelebrant and deacon.
- ❖ Alternatively, the priests could receive from the chalice through self-intinction.
- ❖ No other lay ministers should receive from the chalice.
- ❖ The last priest or deacon receiving from the chalice should be the one responsible for purifying it.
- ❖ Small tables with an ablution cup with water, a purificator, and a dish with bleach or other disinfectant wipe are to be placed at the station(s) for the distribution of Holy Communion.
- ❖ The entrance, offertory, and recessional processions should be omitted.
- ❖ Monetary offerings may be placed in secure receptacles, or in carefully supervised baskets placed at the entrances of the church or other designated spaces.
- ❖ The gifts of bread and wine should continue to be kept from public areas, and may be brought to the altar simply from the credence table in the sanctuary.
- ❖ The lavabo should be done without assistance at the credence table.
- ❖ The hosts to be consecrated for the Faithful should be placed in a ciborium on a corporal towards the side of the altar. This allows the priest to pronounce the words of consecration directly over the host he will consume, with the other hosts not directly in front of him as he prays the Eucharistic prayer.
- ❖ During the elevation of the sacred species concluding the Eucharistic prayer, if there is a deacon present, he may stand alongside the priest and elevate the chalice. Since this action is brief, he does not need to keep a 6-foot-distance.
- ❖ Holding hands during the *Our Father* is suspended.
- ❖ *The Sign of Peace* continues to be a non-contact gesture or nod.

### **Reception of Holy Communion**

- ❖ The faithful have a right to receive Holy Communion in the hand or on the tongue. Distribution of the Precious Blood to the faithful is suspended at this time; neither should the lay faithful receive by intinction.

- ❖ Receiving Holy Communion on the tongue could cause concern for some parishioners following behind (in the line for Holy Communion) about spreading droplets to the fingers of the minister via breath.
  - Options for responding to this fear include:
    - Ask those receiving on the tongue to please receive last
    - Have a designated minister for Holy Communion for those who wish to receive on the tongue

### **Distribution of Holy Communion**

- ❖ In Masses with a reasonable number of people, Holy Communion should be distributed only by the priest(s) and deacon(s).
- ❖ Holy Communion may not be distributed with gloves, nor may it be received in the hand if someone is wearing a glove. Instead, proper and diligent hand hygiene should be observed before and after distributing and/or receiving Holy Communion.
- ❖ If possible, a stand with a corporal and hand sanitizer should be at the place of distribution of Holy Communion.
- ❖ The reverence and the verbal exchange should take place 6 feet away:
  - For the Faithful: Bow –
  - Priest/Deacon: “The Body of Christ” –
  - Faithful: “Amen” – then:
    - Reception by Hand: receive in the hand; step aside, lower mask and consume the Eucharist
    - Reception by tongue: Say “Amen” step forward lower mask and extend tongue as far as possible. Do not close mouth or retract tongue until minister withdraws hand.
    - For both receptions, masks are to be put back after the communicant consumes the Eucharist
- ❖ The minister should take special care not to touch the faithful in any way (hand, tongue, etc.).
- ❖ Priests and deacons (and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion [EMHC] as needed see Special Note, page 6) who make physical contact with a communicant’s tongue or hand, are to place the ciborium on the nearby table, then purify their fingers in the

ablution cup and dry them on the purificator, to ensure that no particles of the Blessed Sacrament remain on their fingers. They are then to clean the same fingers on the bleach or disinfectant wipe provided, and to continue distributing.

- ❖ It is not necessary to sanitize hands between each communicant unless physical contact is made.
- ❖ Special provisions (such as those in need of low-gluten hosts, those unable to receive even low-gluten hosts, and Holy Communion to the homebound) should receive particular consideration from pastors.
- ❖ If the celebrant of the Mass is in a higher-risk group, a different priest or deacon, (or EMHC if no other clergy are available) may distribute Holy Communion.

### **Liturgical and Support Roles**

- ❖ Please continue to ensure that greeters and ushers are trained in new procedures. Their role is not to police guidelines.
- ❖ Use of liturgical ministers should be kept to a bare minimum, employing only those absolutely necessary for the worthy celebration of the Eucharist.
- ❖ A single reader may assist with the first and second readings, as well as the Prayers of the Faithful.
- ❖ A Pastor may choose to have one to two (maximum) Altar Servers to assist who must adhere to proper guidelines regarding wearing a mask and social distancing.
- ❖ Safety precautions (e.g. gloves, masks, etc.) are to be followed for ushers, counters, and others.
- ❖ Choirs are not permitted at this time; one musician and one cantor are permissible.

### **SPECIAL NOTE ON EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF HOLY COMMUNION [EMHC]:**

Normally, it is the responsibility of the priest to bring the Sacraments, especially the Eucharist, but also Penance and Anointing of the Sick, to parishioners who are ill or homebound. Deacons also have the duty of bringing the Eucharist to the sick and homebound, if the priest is unable. In the event that they are unable to do so, and if there is a special need and the homebound parishioner has requested it, an EMHC may take Holy Communion to homebound parishioners at the Pastor's direction for specific cases. The EMHC must have contact with the homebound parishioner and adhere to the parishioner's requirements for coming into their home. This

option should only be employed in the case that the priest or deacon is unable to do so. EMHC's must adhere to the proper safety protocols (e.g. must wear mask and properly dispense the Holy Eucharist).

### **Dismissal and Recessional**

- ❖ All vessels are to be thoroughly purified and cleaned with soap and hot water after every Mass.
- ❖ The processional and recessional are suspended at this time.

### **Outdoor and Open-Air Masses**

For complete information please see [Guidelines for In Open Air/Outdoor Masses.](#)

### **Celebration of the Sacraments**

Eucharistic Adoration, and Perpetual Adoration in particular, are to continue uninterrupted; parish churches should be available for private prayer before our Lord in the Eucharist.

### **Baptisms**

- ❖ Baptisms may certainly continue. Water for Baptism is to be changed and blessed before each baptism. As always, blessed water should be properly disposed of in the sacarium or in the ground.
- ❖ Baptisms are to be done individually, with only the parents, godparents, and immediate family present, following all health protocols.

### **The Sacrament of Penance**

- ❖ More scheduled opportunities for individual Confessions are to be made available to the faithful, especially during the Lenten season.
- ❖ Enclosed confessionals should not be used at this time, but suitable areas should be provided in a more open environment; confidentiality and protection of the Seal of Confession are of utmost importance. Confessional screens should be used, both to protect the penitent's right to anonymity and as a barrier.

- ❖ Pastors may offer to hear Confessions outside or while the penitent is in a vehicle. This may occur only if the Seal of Confession and all other necessary requirements are vigorously observed.
- ❖ Priests should find ways to visit the homes of the sick and homebound, and to offer the Sacrament of Penance in a way that preserves sacramental integrity, either inside or outside.

### **Anointing of the Sick and Care of the Sick**

- ❖ Priests and deacons are strongly encouraged to ensure that the sick and homebound are able to receive the Sacraments, following the necessary protocols.
- ❖ The faithful who are ill should be tended with spiritual sustenance in their time of need. Every effort to bring spiritual comfort to them should be made.
- ❖ The care of the dying must be a top priority, and Holy Viaticum and the Anointing of the Sick are not to be delayed when needed. Access to healthcare institutions should be pre-arranged in case of an emergency.
- ❖ No communal celebrations are permitted at this time.
- ❖ All precautions and protocols mandated by healthcare institutions are to be strictly followed.
- ❖ Only priests and deacons may take Holy Communion to the sick at this time; the assistance of Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion is suspended for the time being.

### **Weddings**

- ❖ Weddings are permitted, but limited to the priest or deacon, bride, groom, best man, and maid/matron of honor, and guests not to exceed 25 percent capacity of the church building.
- ❖ Michigan State law *requires* that a marriage license from the County be obtained and submitted to the officiant prior to the wedding. You may not officiate at a wedding without it, and most Counties within the State have an online process for obtaining them.

### **Funerals**

- ❖ Funerals are permitted, but numbers of guests are not to exceed 25 percent capacity of the church building.
- ❖ Receptions and luncheons in parish facilities are not permitted at this time.
- ❖ Health precautions are to be observed.

## **SECTION III.**

### **GUIDELINES FOR CONDUCTING NON-WORSHIP PROGRAMS AT THE PARISH**

All indoor and outdoor gatherings, events and programs must adhere to the current Michigan Safe Start Plan. (The Diocese of Kalamazoo is in Region 3).

#### **Social Gatherings**

Social or business gatherings are not permitted in Parish buildings at this time. If an organization wishes to conduct a meal-based fundraiser (e.g. fish fry or spaghetti dinner) then they **must first obtain the permission of the Pastor**. Second, **the event may only provide take-out orders and absolutely no in-house dining inside a Parish building is permitted**. The organizers must provide a plan for adhering to all safety and health protocols, as well as the State Guidelines, as they relate to proper food handling, social distancing while doing meal preparation, wearing masks, etc.

#### **Parish Meetings**

All Parish meetings must be virtual and adhere to current State Guidelines.

#### **Faith Formation/Education programs**

Elementary Religious Education programs may continue for K-8. High School programs can be in-person or virtual. Adult Faith Formation programs must be virtual.

REMINDER: Parishes must follow the Guidelines for Religious Education during COVID (found [here](#)) for all Parish-conducted and Parish sponsored youth religious education programs.

Parishes must submit their [COVID Religious Education Preparedness Plan](#) to the Secretariat for Parish Life and Lay Leadership before classes are allowed to begin.

## **ADULT EDUCATION AND SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION FOR ADULTS\***

(\*e.g. parents of children to be baptized; engaged couples)

### **Adult Education and Sacramental preparation must be done virtually if possible.**

Any in-person sessions must have approval from Jamin Herold: Executive Director for Parish Life and Lay Leadership ([jherold@diokzoo.org](mailto:jherold@diokzoo.org)) . Please email with reason for in person sessions, how protocols will be followed, and how many people will be in attendance.

General Guidelines for in-person:

The most desirable action is meeting individually with single-family households, six feet distance and masks should be used in these situations.

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It is encouraged to use creative ways to facilitate these opportunities for individual preparation including training strong lay faithful to participate in assisting with these trainings.

In situations where resources limit the ability for individual preparation, the following guidelines must be followed.

- ❖ Limit the attendance to 25% capacity of room used,
- ❖ Households (couples being prepared together for the sacrament of marriage may be considered one household) must be kept at least six feet apart,
- ❖ All participants must wear a mask,
- ❖ No food or drink allowed during the sessions, fresh air should be circulated as much as possible,
- ❖ Overall preparation and meeting time should be limited to mitigate the amount of potential exposure and the potential viral load built up in the air.

### **Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy**

Works of Mercy are permitted on Parish grounds during this time but must adhere to state guidelines and safety protocols for indoor gatherings. Following are the categories permitted:

#### **Food and Supplies Distributions**

Food distribution, clothing distribution, school supply distribution etc., are permitted on Parish grounds. State orders on social distancing and masks must be followed. Occupancy should be monitored and kept at the State orders for retail and other such businesses.

#### **Financial assistance client interviews**

Those organizations providing financial assistance to those in need are allowed to have scheduled client interviews at the Parish (e.g. St. Vincent DePaul).

#### **Medical**

Medical procedures such as blood drives or medical screenings are permitted at Parishes, and must follow all state orders and protocols for these organizations. Parishes may also reach out to the local health department if they have space to provide for COVID-19 testing or other needs of the local health department.

## **Support Groups**

Support groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) are permitted to meet in Parish facilities. State/Health Department ordered guidelines for indoor gatherings must be followed.

## **Outdoor Gatherings**

Following all State orders and guidelines, receptions, and gatherings may take place. Masks, social distancing, and numbers of people must all be monitored. It is important not only to take into consideration the number of people in attendance, but also the density of people for the area. Ample space is necessary to allow for people to maintain 6-foot distancing.

## APPENDIX

### APPENDIX A

Diocesan Resources may be found at [www.diokzoo.org](http://www.diokzoo.org) Examples include:

Sunday Experience: <https://diokzoo.org/faithathome>

The Way: <https://diokzoo.org/theway>

Resources Page: <https://www.diokzoo.org/athomeresources>

Diocesan Pastoral Center staff assistance:

Vicar General/General Secretary: [Msgr. Michael Osborn](#)

Office of the Bishop/Confirmation scheduling: [Lexie Shoemaker-Fath](#)

Catechetical: [Jamin Herold](#)

Communications: [Vicki Cessna](#)

[Diocesan Pastoral Center Directory](#)

## **APPENDIX B**

### **Safety and Hygiene Protocols\***

#### **Hand Washing:**

- ❖ Clergy, and others who assist, are to wash their hands before and after set-up for Mass, as well as after Mass and clean up. Any and all vessels used at Mass must be cleaned with soap and hot water.
- ❖ Hand sanitizer is to be available in the sanctuary as needed during a liturgy. If possible, hand sanitizer should also be placed near the entrances of the church for the faithful. Invite the faithful to bring their own supply of hand sanitizer to use before Holy Communion.

#### **Gloves:**

- ❖ Disposable gloves are to be available for sacristans, those preparing, and those cleaning the areas to be used.
- ❖ Instructions for the proper removal of the gloves after each use are to be given/posted.

#### **Masks**

- ❖ Cloth face coverings (masks) are to be worn by everyone approaching the church and inside the church (except for those under 2 years old), as well as all church buildings.
- ❖ The priest celebrant and other ministers need not wear masks or gloves during the liturgy, since they are more than 6 feet from the assembly during Mass.
- ❖ The priest celebrant, deacon must wear a mask during the distribution of Holy Communion

(\*reference: *Diocesan Preparatory Guidelines and Planning Resources, May 2020*)

## Cleaning and Disinfecting

**REQUIREMENT: Parishes must continue to adhere to the procedures required to be in place since May 2020 and maintain the required staffing (volunteers) in order to successfully ensure these sanitizing and cleaning measures are in place for public worship.**

[See [CDC Disinfecting Building Facilities](#)]

To help stop the spread of the virus, effective cleaning and disinfecting is essential. It is very important to be able to know the distinction between these two practices. It is also advisable to ensure that the products being used are effective in disinfecting as determined by the Environmental Protection Agency.

It is required to remove all items from the pews, e.g., hymnals, missalettes, envelopes, to make it easier to clean and disinfect.

Consider propping open all necessary doors to minimize touching of doors.

After each liturgy, items used by the public should be disinfected (e.g. door handles, restrooms, push plates, knobs, handrails, etc.). Pews and chairs should also be disinfected.

If parishes do not have available maintenance staff for this level of cleaning, healthy parishioners are to be asked to help with this task after Mass.

### APPENDIX C

NOTE from USCCB regarding Ash Wednesday Liturgy – following page



## Committee on Divine Worship

3211 FOURTH STREET NE · WASHINGTON DC 20017-1194 · 202-541-3060 · FAX 202-541-3088

### MEMORANDUM

To: All Bishops  
From: Most Rev. Leonard P. Blair, Archbishop of Hartford  
Chairman, USCCB Committee on Divine Worship  
Date: January 12, 2021  
Re: Ash Wednesday and the memorial of St. Blaise in 2021

You will recall that the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments issued two decrees last year (dated March 19 and March 25) that provided special guidance for the celebration of Holy Week during the pandemic. The instructions that were given were intended mostly to assist priests in circumstances in which the presence of a congregation would be impossible. Those provisions, however, were explicitly granted only for the year 2020. As Lent approaches, we will have to wait to see whether the Holy See will issue similar guidance this year, should the situation continue to warrant it.

In the meantime, the Congregation has issued a “Note on Ash Wednesday,” and the Committee on Divine Worship wishes to offer some brief observations on it and on the celebration of the memorial of St. Blaise.

#### **Blessing of Throats on the memorial of St. Blaise (February 3)**

Note that the *Book of Blessings* contains the following provision for this rite:

1628. If, for pastoral reasons, each individual cannot be blessed in the manner described in no. 1627, for example when great numbers are gathered for the blessing or when the memorial of Saint Blaise occurs on a Sunday, a priest or deacon may give the blessing to all assembled by extending hands, without the crossed candles, over the people while saying the prayer of blessing. A lay minister says the prayer proper to lay ministers without making the sign of the cross.

The current circumstances would certainly be considered a sufficient pastoral reason to avoid administration of the blessing to individuals in the usual manner, should there be any concern of danger due to the ongoing pandemic.

#### **Distribution of Ashes on Ash Wednesday (February 17)**

While Ash Wednesday is not a holyday of obligation and while there is no requirement for the clergy and faithful to receive the imposition of ashes, it is rightly observed as a celebration of high importance, and many will surely wish to participate even amid the current difficulties.

During this time of pandemic, the Holy See has modified the method of distributing the ashes, as outlined in the following “Note”:

Prot. N. 17/21

**NOTE ON ASH WEDNESDAY**  
**Distribution of Ashes in Time of Pandemic**

The Priest says the prayer for blessing the ashes. He sprinkles the ashes with holy water, without saying anything. Then he addresses all those present and only once says the formula as it appears in the Roman Missal, applying it to all in general: “Repent, and believe in the Gospel”, or “Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return”.

The Priest then cleanses his hands, puts on a face mask and distributes the ashes to those who come to him or, if appropriate, he goes to those who are standing in their places. The Priest takes the ashes and sprinkles them on the head of each one without saying anything.

From the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, 12 January 2021.

Robert Card. Sarah  
*Prefect*

+Arthur Roche  
*Archbishop Secretary*

These changes minimize the necessity of physical contact between minister and recipient and remove the need for the minister to speak while in close proximity to the recipient.

The distribution of ashes via sprinkling is a common practice in some countries but is not well known here. Therefore, the Committee encourages ministers to provide some explanation to the faithful, to avoid unnecessary confusion.

Note also that the *Book of Blessings* provides instructions for the distribution of ashes outside of Mass (nos. 1656-1678).

As we move closer to Holy Week, the Committee on Divine Worship will continue to monitor developments and offer further observations for your consideration.