



CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF KALAMAZOO

GUIDELINES for Public Worship and Parish Activities during the COVID-19 Pandemic

June 6, 2021

Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

We are called to care for and love each other, in particular the most vulnerable among us. Throughout this pandemic our primary concern has been for the physical and spiritual well-being of all our sisters and brothers in Christ. We are mindful of those in our care who remain in the vulnerable and immune-compromised categories.

With that as our basic premise, we need to adjust and modify some of our current practices so that all members of the Body of Christ feel welcome at the Mass and participate in other Parish events. To allow sufficient time to prepare ourselves, **these Revised Guidelines will be effective next weekend, June 5-6, 2021**, the Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ. We should remember we have not yet fully emerged from the pandemic and the need for vigilance still exists. Our safety and health practices such as washing hands, staying home when sick, and social distancing when appropriate remain important. Let us continue to remember in prayer all those who have lost their lives to COVID-19 as well as their family and friends impacted by their loss. Let us as well be unceasing in our prayers and petitions to God for an end to this pandemic.

My hope and prayer for all of us now is that, despite the traumatic experience we have all endured throughout this past year, we will allow the Holy Spirit, Who filled the hearts of the Apostles on the first Pentecost and turned them into “fearless witnesses”, to fill our hearts as well. May Pentecost 2021 be a time when each of us will personally invite the Holy Spirit to renew, empower, and embolden us to be joyful disciples and effective witnesses to the Risen and Ascended Jesus in our lives. [*Letter to the Faithful, Pentecost 2021*]

Assuring you of my heartfelt prayers for you, and asking that we always pray for one another, I remain

Faithfully yours in Christ,
Most Rev. Paul J. Bradley
Bishop of Kalamazoo

Keeping Holy the Lord's Day

The General Dispensation was lifted on May 22/23, 2021 on the Feast of Pentecost. Bishop Bradley issued a *Letter to the Faithful* which may be found [here](#).

Bishop Bradley's video message may be found [here](#):

OVERVIEW of updated changes*

*please review entire document for additional details.

What has changed:

- Masks are optional for those who are vaccinated [see details under Section I: General Notes].
- Capacity restrictions are lifted; however, a section must be designated that requires masks and social distancing for those who feel more comfortable continuing those practices
- The addition of Altar Servers is allowed during the liturgy
- Choirs may resume if space allows for social distancing
- Bulletin distribution may resume
- Hymnals may return to the pews for use
- Indoor and outdoor Parish activities may resume in adherence to current State guidelines

What remains the same:

- Clergy and anyone assisting with Holy Communion are to be masked during the distribution of Holy Communion
- Enclosed Confessionals may only be used if proper ventilation is possible
- Cry rooms and nurseries remain closed
- Cleaning and safety protocols (hand washing/sanitizing) must be followed
- Indoor and outdoor gatherings are subject to the capacity limits set by the State (MDHHS).

SECTION I: Liturgy and Worship Guidelines

GENERAL NOTES:

Mask wearing

On Friday, May 14, 2021, the MDHHS (Michigan Department of Health and Human Services) updated its [Gatherings and Mask Order](#) to align with CDC guidelines which state: "fully vaccinated people no longer need to wear a mask or physically distance in any setting, except where required by federal, state, local, tribal, or territorial laws, rules, and regulations, including local business and workplace guidance."

In light of this development, and taking into account the growing numbers of people becoming fully vaccinated and/or having the access to vaccinations; the following changes to liturgical worship at parish churches and chapels within the Diocese of Kalamazoo are effective immediately:

- The Faithful are not required to wear masks during outdoor Masses; social distancing is still advised, with the exception of households.
- Mask wearing is optional for members of the Faithful who are vaccinated. However, members of the Faithful that are unvaccinated are asked to continue to wear their masks, for their own protection, as well as the protection of others.
 - NOTE: Please communicate this pastorally, with the understanding that some members of the Faithful will also want to continue wearing a mask even if they do fall into exempt categories.
- Anyone assisting with Holy Communion must also wear a mask.
- Ushers and parish staff are NOT to ask any parishioner and/or attendee what their vaccination status is.
- Parish staff offices should continue to follow the guidance and rules of [MIOSHA](#).

Capacity

Capacity restrictions are lifted. **However, every parish church or chapel must maintain a section or area of the church that retains current social distancing and mask requirements for those who feel more comfortable continuing these practices.** NOTE: these are not to be labeled/designated/or referred to as "vaccinated and unvaccinated areas", but are open to all the Faithful who choose per their own comfort levels.

Overflow Plan

There must be a plan in place to provide for people who want to come to Mass when the capacity in the main Church has been reached. There should be a designated area in another part of the parish grounds to provide for those in the “overflow” category, as long as they can participate in the Mass virtually through live-streaming or simulcast.

CELEBRATION OF THE HOLY MASS

- Holy Water fonts may be refilled, but should be emptied and replenished weekly.
- Hymnals may be returned to the pews.
- A stand may be placed 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, as well as the deacon, as appropriate.
- Alternatively, the priests may receive from the Chalice through self-intinction.
- No one else should receive from the Chalice.
- The last priest or deacon receiving from the Chalice should be the one responsible for purifying it.
- Small tables for 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 may be allowed, with adherence to social distancing.
- The gifts of Bread and Wine should continue to be kept from public areas until brought up in the procession, and should be covered when brought forward.
- Monetary offerings may be received from the pews through use of the long handled baskets, placed in secure receptacles, or in carefully supervised baskets placed in designated spaces in the Church.
- 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 toward 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, a 6-foot-distance is not required.
- Holding hands during the Our Father is suspended.

- The Sign of Peace continues to be a non-contact gesture or nod.

All vessels are to be thoroughly purified by a priest or deacon, then cleaned with soap and hot water after every Mass.

Reception of Holy Communion

The Faithful may receive Holy Communion, either on the tongue or in the hand. Distribution of the Precious Blood to the Faithful, even by means of intinction, remains suspended at this time.

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. Every effort should be made to provide a stand with a corporal and hand sanitizer at the place of distribution of Holy Communion.

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, below), who make physical contact with a communicant's tongue, 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. As an alternative, a purificator soaked in a 60% alcohol solution could be used after distributing to those receiving on the tongue.

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 may resume.
- Readers may assist with the first and second readings, as well as the Prayers of the Faithful.
- A Pastor may choose to have up to three (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.
- Small choirs may be used, provided there is the necessary space to social distance. Otherwise, one musician and one cantor remain options.
- **Plans must be in place for cleaning crews that are sanitizing the church and surrounding areas each week. This is a critically important function that must continue diligently.**

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 the Faithful 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 distribute the Holy Eucharist).

CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENTS

Baptisms

Baptisms are permitted. Water for Baptism is to be changed and blessed before each Baptism. As always, blessed water should be properly disposed of in the *sacrarium* or appropriately in the ground. Baptisms held outside the celebration of the Mass should also adhere to capacity limitations and social distancing.

Immersion can be used if there is only one person to be baptized. If there are two or more children or adults to be baptized, then baptism by infusion (water poured over the forehead of the one to be baptized) should be used.

It is important that, once a Baptism has occurred, the same water is not used for the next person. There are several ways this may be done.

After the Water is blessed in the usual way:

- a) a pitcher may be used to take the Holy Water from the font, and then the pitcher or baptismal shell or another appropriate vessel may be used to pour the water over the forehead;
- b) multiple bowls may be filled with water from the font for each person to be baptized; or
- c) a basin may be placed just below the font; the water taken from the font used to baptize the person over the basin.

Confession

More scheduled opportunities for individual Confessions are to be made available to the Faithful.

Enclosed confessionals may be used at this time *only if proper ventilation can be achieved*. If not, alternate areas should also 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 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.

All precautions and protocols mandated by healthcare institutions are to be strictly followed.

Wedding Masses

Wedding Masses are permitted, with adherence to all safety and health protocols and capacity guidelines.

[SPECIAL NOTE: Michigan State law requires that a marriage license from the County be obtained and submitted to the officiant prior to the wedding. Clergy may not officiate at a wedding without it, and most Counties within the State have an online process for obtaining them.]

Funeral Mass of Christian Burial

Mass of Christian Burials and on-site Visitations are permitted, with adherence to all safety and health protocols and capacity guidelines.

[FOR WEDDING RECEPTIONS/FUNERAL LUNCHEONS GUIDELINES SEE SECTION II]

Eucharistic Adoration

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.

SECTION II: Guidelines for Conducting Non-Worship Programs at the Parish

Non-worship program at the Parish may resume. NOTE: All indoor and outdoor gatherings, events and programs must adhere to the current State MDHHS orders (e.g. capacity regulations) – visit: <https://www.michigan.gov/coronavirus/>

For future planning it is advised to have a contingency plan, in particular for the use of indoor facilities, as State orders may change.

SECTION III: Communication

Parish printed bulletin distribution may resume.

It is recommended that Parishes continue to offer the live streaming of the Mass (at minimum at least one Sunday Mass).

SECTION IV: Safety and Hygiene Protocols

Diligent attention to all safety and hygiene protocols must continue. It is vitally important to continue to practice all those outlined below for all onsite activities at the Parish including worship, events and meetings.

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

See Section I; General Notes

Cleaning and Disinfecting

NOTE: The following Addendum was released April 9, 2021:

With the release of the new guidance from the CDC on Cleaning and Disinfecting your facility the Diocese of Kalamazoo is adjusting its requirement that all the pews and common areas be disinfected after each Mass. The new recommendations state that **cleaning pews once a day with soap and water should be sufficient**. The CDC has recommendations on creating a plan for your cleaning as well as some recommendations on more thorough cleaning for certain circumstances (such as events which include high vulnerable populations and if there are a large number of maskless people in and out of your facility). Please read through the recommendations at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html>.

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.

Catholic Diocese of Kalamazoo

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

Once a day 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

Resources

State of Michigan current guidelines and details on orders:

<https://www.michigan.gov/coronavirus/>

https://www.michigan.gov/documents/leo/MIOSHA_COVID_Emergency_Rules_726100_7.pdf

https://www.michigan.gov/coronavirus/0,9753,7-406-98178_98455-560465--,00.html

Diocesan Resources:

- www.diokzoo.org
- Sunday Experience: <https://diokzoo.org/faithathome>
- The Way: <https://diokzoo.org/theway>
- Resources Page: <https://www.diokzoo.org/athomerresources>

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](#)