



CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF KALAMAZOO

# UPDATED GUIDELINES: Public Worship and Parish Activities during the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Updates Effective March 19, 2021, Solemnity of St. Joseph,  
Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary

## General Dispensation

While the dispensation from the Sunday obligation to attend Mass is granted until further notice (see [Letter to the Faithful, Nov. 11, 2020](#)), all the faithful still 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 for resources.]

## SECTION I: Liturgy and Worship Guidelines

### GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

#### *Capacity*

In accordance with the particular specific layout of your church building, if you are able, you may increase the capacity of attendees up to (but not exceeding) 50 percent of your church building capacity **while giving priority to maintaining the necessary social distancing of six feet.**

Optional considerations to optimize capacity:

- Dedicated high risk section with expanded separation between people
- Dedicated Mass with lower capacity for high risk population
- Seating options for close-extended family members or household “bubbles”
- Utilizing every other pew and indicating seating so people are not directly placed in front/back of each other.

#### *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.

#### *Reservation/Sign-up Procedures*

For those Parishes using the Reservation/Sign up procedures, Pastors and parish staffs are encouraged to re-examine the parish process for reservation/sign-up procedures in light of anticipated increased attendance.

## 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 may be allowed with strict adherence to social distancing.
- 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 5 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.
- Plans must be in place for cleaning crews that are sanitizing the church and surrounding areas following each Mass. 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 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 must adhere to social distancing.

### *Outdoor/Open Air Masses*

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

## 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 in the ground. Baptisms held outside the celebration of the Mass should also adhere to capacity restrictions and social distancing.

Immersion can be used if there is only one person to be baptized. If there are two or more babies/people to be baptized, than 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, 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 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.\**

Priests and deacons may take Holy Communion to the sick at this time; the assistance of Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion may be employed – see special note on page 5.

### *Wedding Mass*

Wedding Masses are permitted, but limited to the priest or deacon, bride, groom, best man, and maid/matron of honor, and guests not to exceed 50 percent capacity of the church building.

**[SPECIAL NOTE:** 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.]

WEDDING RECEPTIONS/FUNERAL LUNCHEONS (see Section III)

### *Funeral/Mass of Christian Burial*

Mass of Christian Burials are permitted and limited to current capacity within the church building. Onsite Visitation is permitted with adherence to all safety and health protocols and capacity guidelines.

### *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: Holy Week Liturgies 2021

### PALM SUNDAY

Mass for Palm Sunday is to take place, observing the restrictions currently in place (e.g. health and safety protocols, etc.)

The Palms should be on tables at the entrance of the Church and people should be encouraged to take the Palm that they want for themselves/their homes as they come in. They should not be distributed or handed by ushers/other parish volunteers. The Palms will be blessed when the Priest walks up and down the main aisle sprinkling with Holy Water.

Procession into the church of the entire congregation is not permitted; however the clergy and altar servers may process. Pastors may choose to have a small number of parishioners included to represent the Parish family but must do so while maintaining social distancing.

### MASS OF CHRISM

The Chrism Mass will take place on Tuesday, March 30, 2021 at 6 p.m. Priests, deacons and their wives, and no more than two Parish representatives are encouraged to come. Reservation information has been sent separately. [See March 4, 2021 Memo].

Priests will renew their Ordination Promises during the Mass, as is customary, and as such should make every effort to participate.

The Holy Oils will be blessed, as usual, during the Chrism Mass. They will be distributed to Parish representatives following the conclusion of the Mass. The distribution will occur after the conclusion of the Mass. Instructions will be given to the Parish Representatives at the Mass.

### HOLY THURSDAY

The Washing of Feet is to be omitted.

The Procession with the Blessed Sacrament to the Altar of Repose may be clergy only, or the Pastor may elect to include a few altar servers and select parishioners, if maintaining social distancing is possible.

The Blessed Sacrament is to be kept in an Altar of Repose and suitable times made available for private prayer.

An adequate number of Hosts should be reserved for the Good Friday Liturgy.

## GOOD FRIDAY

The reading of the Passion may take place as usual.

For the Universal Prayer, the Holy Father has asked that an additional intercession be added, following “For Those in Tribulation”:

XI. For Those Suffering from the Current Pandemic.

**Deacon (or lay minister):** Let us pray, dearly beloved, to God the Almighty Father, the He may extend His hand in mercy to all those affected by the coronavirus pandemic.

Silent Prayer

**Priest:** Almighty, ever-living God, heal those who are ill, comfort those who mourn, give solace to all who are afraid and alone, and protect those who are providing medical care. Make us instruments of your peace among our brothers and sisters. In your mercy, alleviate our fears and eliminate this scourge, so that we may come together again to give you praise and build your Kingdom. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

**SPECIAL NOTE:** For the Adoration of the Cross, only the celebrant is to kiss the Cross. The Faithful may be invited to venerate the cross by a non-contact gesture (e.g. bow/genuflect/kneel). Parishes are encouraged to place the Cross in a position that would mitigate anyone touching it. A Server should be on-hand to sanitize the Cross as needed.

## EASTER VIGIL

The Easter Vigil is to be celebrated only in the Cathedral and parish churches, no earlier than 8:45 pm.

**Note:** A guiding principle within Collaboratives where only one priest is available is that the Easter Vigil is to be celebrated in only one of the churches, with all of the Paschal Candles from each of the parishes to be blessed and lit together at the one Solemn Liturgy. If a Parish within the Collaborative has a resident priest(s) they may choose to celebrate the Mass.

The preparation and lighting of the fire “The Solemn Beginning of the Vigil” or Lucinarium, as well as the procession, are limited to clergy and a small representational number of parishioners may be included if social distancing is feasible. The Paschal Candle(s) [cf. instructions for Collaboratives] is (are) to be simply lit, and the Easter Proclamation (Exultet) is then proclaimed; the Liturgy of the Word follows.

## ***Baptisms:***

There should be only one Blessing of Water and the Vigil and only one Baptismal Font, in order to preserve the integrity of this most sacred of Liturgies and the theological significance of the Rites.

Immersion can be used if there is only one person to be baptized. If there are two or more people to be baptized, than 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 may be taken from the font and used to baptize the person over the basin.

The blessed water is to be disposed into the sacrarium after it is used.

The Liturgy of the Eucharist is celebrated as usual.

## **EASTER SUNDAY**

The celebration of Easter Mass(es), as well as those within the Octave of Easter, including Divine Mercy Sunday, should be done according to the protocols currently in place.

## **OTHER CELEBRATIONS**

Expressions of popular piety and processions that normally occur during Holy Week, such as “Living Stations of the Cross” and Communal Penance Services must follow all safety and health protocols, e.g. masks must be worn, social distancing must be followed, etc.

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

All indoor and outdoor gatherings, events and programs must adhere to the current State guidelines – visit: <https://www.michigan.gov/coronavirus/>

### PARISH MEETINGS

Parish meetings may resume beginning March 19, 2021, with the approval of the Pastor.

Meeting attendance must be limited to 25 people. Social distancing as well as all safety protocols must be followed during the meeting. This includes mandatory mask-wearing, staying 6 feet apart and thorough cleaning and sanitizing afterwards. A plan for this must be submitted to the Pastor for his review and approval before any Parish group meets. This includes any/all social activities.

### 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 may be held in-person and must adhere to General Guidelines for In-Person Meetings (see below).

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 may be held in-person beginning March 19, 2021, with the approval of the Pastor.

## GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR IN-PERSON MEETINGS

- The most desirable action is meeting individually with single-family households, six feet distance and masks should be used in these situations.
- 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 no more than 25 people (or the capacity that is reached due to social distancing of 6 feet)
- 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.

### **WEDDING RECEPTIONS AND FUNERAL LUNCHEONS:**

Wedding receptions and Funeral luncheon gatherings may be held with the approval of the Pastor but must adhere to current State Guidelines for capacity. Currently (as of March 5, 2021) the maximum number of people allowed inside is 25 people. Outside gatherings, as weather permits, are allowed and the maximum number of people is 300. Health and safety protocols 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.

## **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***

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

### ***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

### *Resources*

State of Michigan current guidelines and details on orders:

- <https://www.michigan.gov/coronavirus/>
- [https://www.michigan.gov/documents/coronavirus/3-2\\_Capacity\\_Limits\\_Fact\\_Sheet\\_v11\\_717921\\_7.pdf](https://www.michigan.gov/documents/coronavirus/3-2_Capacity_Limits_Fact_Sheet_v11_717921_7.pdf)

Diocesan Resources:

- [www.diokzoo.org](http://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](#)