

July 28, 2021



## A Guide for the Lay Faithful

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Catholic Diocese of Richmond and its parishes sought to balance reasonable precautions to protect the health of all, while continuing to provide access to Mass and the sacraments, and minister to the spiritual needs of the faithful. While specific guidance has been given regarding certain expectations, pastors are being given discretion for implementation for the various needs of a parish community on the local level. The following is a quick reference for what you need to know for liturgies and sacraments.

**Dispensation** – The dispensation from the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and holy days was lifted on June 26, 2021. The faithful are encouraged to return to full, in-person participation in the Eucharist, the source and summit of our Catholic faith. Please consult your pastor regarding questions on the dispensation.

**Gathering Limits** – Capacity limits for liturgies were lifted on May 28, 2021.

**Social Distancing** – There are currently no social distancing requirements.

**Daily Mass Schedules** – Parishes are encouraged to resume regular Mass schedules.

**Livestreamed Masses** – For the benefit of those still not vaccinated, those who are infirmed or homebound, and at the pastor's discretion, the livestreaming of Masses is encouraged to continue. Equally, the diocese encourages priests to post written and printed homilies.

**Disinfecting** – No requirements are in place for sanitizing and cleaning between Masses. Parishes are encouraged to continue cleaning the church building and pews similar to pre-COVID protocols.

## Communion

- Until further notice, Communion from the cup is only available to the priest.
- Priests, deacons and extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist may distribute Communion.
- All distributing Communion should sanitize their hands before distribution.
- Communicants retains the discretion on how to receive, either on the tongue or in the hand.
- Parishioners should follow the procedures of their individual parish for the distribution of Communion.

## General Information

- **Face Coverings** – Per guidance from the Virginia Department of Health, the following guidelines are given to parishes:
  - Fully vaccinated people no longer need to wear a mask in any setting.
  - Anyone unvaccinated or not fully vaccinated, ages 5 and older, should wear a face covering when present for any Mass or liturgical celebration.
  - No one should supply proof or inquire into the vaccination status of a parishioner.
- **Online Registration Systems** – Sign-up systems or electronic invitation platforms to attend liturgical celebrations have concluded since there are no longer any social distancing requirements.
- **Hand Cleanliness** – Offering hand sanitizer is encouraged at parishes.

## Liturgical Basics

- The following liturgical aspects that were suspended or modified are now restored:
  - Choirs and congregations may resume singing.
  - At the discretion of the pastor, parish baptismal and holy water fonts may be reintroduced.
  - Worship aids and bulletins may resume.
  - Collection baskets may return.
  - Procession of the offertory and gifts may resume.

*\*Please consult your individual parish or pastor for further information on other guidelines as needed.*

