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ARCHDIOCESE  
of BALTIMORE

# COVID-19 Response

*The following guidelines are subject to change, pending updated guidance from public health and governmental agencies*

## **PHASE TWO**

Guidelines for Resuming Public Masses and the Sacraments of Initiation



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## I. Overview

### 1. Varying Re-opening Dates

As we move toward the May 30-31 date when *some* parishes will be allowed to open for public Masses, please keep in mind that this is only possible:

- If your local jurisdiction is allowing religious services (for more than 10 people), and
- If your parish has completed the archdiocesan checklist for reopening.

**Parishes are not required to celebrate public Masses by May 30-31, even if these conditions have been met, if the pastor determines the parish is not ready to do so.**

### 2. Liturgies at Auxiliary Sites

It is permissible to celebrate liturgies simultaneously at auxiliary sites on the parish campus in addition to the main church, as long as each site/space maintains the 6-foot physical distancing requirement and does not exceed 1/3 of the seating capacity of each facility. Special care should be taken to enforce physical distancing and the immediate dispersion of gatherings outside the church before and after Mass.

### 3. Imposing Restrictive Requirements

Parishes are asked to refrain from imposing requirements that exceed archdiocesan or local guidance, and to consult the archdiocese if there is a specific reason for wishing to implement policies that go beyond existing guidelines.

### 4. Phase II Additions to Public Worship

When a parish begins Phase II, all facets of Phase I “Resuming Public Worship” remain in force with three additions:

- a. Sunday Masses will resume with expanded attendance as outlined in III.1 below.
- b. Outdoor Masses are permitted at the pastor’s discretion.
- c. The Sacraments of Initiation are reinstated.

The details of these additions are described below.

## II. General Directives

### 1. Dispensation from Sunday Mass

Archbishop Lori has extended his dispensation of the faithful from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass through the entirety of Phase II. Parishes will continue to make Masses available to the faithful via livestreaming or recording, thereby ensuring that the faithful may maintain a spiritual connection with their local church.

### 2. Delegation of Faculty to Confirm Baptized Catholics

Archbishop Lori has temporarily delegated the faculty to Confirm Baptized Catholics to pastors through December 31, 2020. **PLEASE NOTE: Parish Youth Confirmations may not be scheduled until further notice.**

### **3. Reinstatement of the Sacraments of Initiation**

The RCIA Sacraments of Initiation and First Communion of Children may be celebrated during Phase II. There is no further need to seek individual delegation from the Chancery to Confirm Baptized Catholics since this is now covered by the power bestowed in #2 on page 3.

### **4. Dispensation from RCIA Scrutiny Rites**

For those who have been in the RCIA process, Archbishop Lori has granted dispensation from the three Scrutiny Rites prior to Baptism.

### **5. Provisions for Resumption of Public Worship\***

*\*if allowed by local jurisdictions*

Sunday Masses may be held during Phase II with the following provisions in effect:

- The number of individuals present at Mass, including liturgical ministers, does not exceed the Archdiocese's restriction on the number of people able to be gathered: up to 1/3 of the church's seating capacity with physical distancing required (in many cases this will be far less than 1/3 capacity).
- Those who are symptomatic or who have been exposed to the virus within 14 days are not permitted to enter the church, in accordance with national, state and local health directives. Anyone with a cough of any sort, or anyone who does not feel well should not come to church. State guidance from the Governor's office encourages *either* taking temperatures at religious services or asking parishioners to do so at home.
  - The Archdiocese is NOT requiring the taking of temperatures at the church but instead asks parishioners to take their temperatures at home prior to coming to church.
  - To our knowledge, no local jurisdiction is requiring churches to take temperatures at services, but please alert the Archdiocese at [riskmanagement@archbalt.org](mailto:riskmanagement@archbalt.org) if you hear differently.
- Those who are at risk because of an underlying health issue or who are 60 years of age or older are strongly encouraged, for their own health, to avoid the risk of attending public celebrations of the Church. Anyone attending assumes some personal risk.
- Those attending church must wear a facial covering, with the exception of children under the age of 2 years.
- The Sacraments of Reconciliation, Baptism, First Eucharist, and the RCIA Sacraments of Initiation will be reinstated. Archbishop Lori has granted dispensation from the Scrutiny Rites for those unable to attend church in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Churches will be open for private prayer and adoration while observing physical distancing and capacity restrictions during Phase II.

### **III. Resuming Public Worship: Additions to Phase I**

#### **1. Expanded Seating Capacity**

The number of individuals who may be in the church at once expands from 10 to 1/3 total seating capacity of the worship space. In many cases, physical distancing restrictions will allow for far fewer than 1/3 capacity.

##### **a. Restricting the Size of the Assembly**

In order to keep the size of the assembly in line with Phase II guidelines, it is suggested that parishes utilize online and call-in Mass registration for those wishing to attend a Mass. Because there are individuals who will be unable to participate in these for several reasons, it is suggested that the number of individuals allowed to sign up should be fewer than your capacity allows, so that walk-ins may be accommodated. This will lessen the possibility of people being turned away from Mass; however, the possibility that “walk-ins” will be accommodated should not be advertised so as to limit the number of people showing up without registering. Parishes should continue to livestream or post their Masses for those who cannot attend due to size restrictions or other reasons.

##### **b. Training of Ministers of Hospitality/Ushers**

- In order to maintain the 6-foot physical distancing requirement, more ushers (ministers of hospitality) will be needed than previously. These individuals will need to be prepared for the new regulations prior to the day of the first public Mass. The procedures for arrival, seating before Mass, the Communion procession, and dismissal will be significantly more regimented. Likewise, the updated process for using restroom facilities will require ushers to provide guidance to parishioners.
- Ushers/Ministers of Hospitality should wear facial coverings at all times. Because ushers may come into contact with high-touch surfaces, they are not required, but may wear gloves.
- Since each family group may sit close to one another, consider having them sit in one section of the church. This will make physical distancing between families and individuals easier to manage.
- Ushers should begin seating individuals from the front of the church to the back, and in such a way, that no one has to “step over” another to reach his/her seat. For example, consider seating individuals in the middle section of pews first and then seating them at the ends of pews. At the end of Mass, ushers should release the assembly from the rear of the church to the front, again emphasizing physical distancing. Consider posting signage and/or communicating the processes for entering, seating, exiting, and receiving Communion to parishioners in advance of Mass.

##### **c. Offertory Baskets**

Collection baskets (or any other materials) are not to be passed from one family or from one individual to another, nor shall ushers take up the collection from the assembly. Stationary baskets may be used for donations and should be placed in locations that are easy to find and that allow them to be monitored by the ushers until the donations are collected and handled according to the proper protocols. It is recommended that the faithful make use of electronic giving to minimize

the risk of handling envelopes and cash. The Archdiocesan website continues to make “universal giving” available for those wishing to make their donations to their parish online.

#### **d. Communion Procession**

The Communion procession must be designed in such a way that allows individuals to remain 6 feet apart and to not pass anyone walking in the opposite direction. Consider making aisles one-way for the distribution of Communion and having everyone enter the Communion line, whether or not the individual will receive Communion. This will prevent a person from having to “step over” someone who remains in the pew.

#### **e. Other Considerations**

- **Vestments**

- Due to the difficulty of cleaning most vestments, as well as the time and cost required, it is advisable that priests and deacons wear their own vestments. If at all possible, visiting priests should take their alb and chasuble with them when they leave a parish site.
- If priests and deacons have to share vestments during the same weekend, consider some way to disinfect them that will not damage the material.
- Albs, cassocks and surplices should be laundered often.

- **Altar Servers**

- Parishes should avoid use of altar servers, when possible. Keep in mind that some parents might not want their child to serve at Mass until a later date. Otherwise, schedule as few altar servers as possible for Masses during Phase II. Remember that servers count toward the capacity limits.
- If a parish has enough albs or cassocks and surplices available, consider assigning each server with his/her own vestment and encouraging the server to take the vestments home until scheduled again.
- If altar servers must share vestments during the same weekend, consider some way of disinfecting them that will not damage the material. In this case, the vestments should be laundered every week.

- **Sacristies**

- Pastors should consider how to minimize contact in sacristies.

## **2. Outdoor Masses**

- Outdoor Masses have no limit on attendance unless otherwise restricted by local jurisdictions, but must adhere to physical distancing requirements. The ground should be clearly marked to indicate where people can sit/stand while keeping physical distancing requirements. “Aisles” should also be marked to ease the Communion flow.
- Parishioners must bring their own chairs or blankets. This will remove any necessity for the parish team to disinfect chairs or benches.
- Pastors must develop a process for distributing Communion during outdoor Masses that adhere to the overall goals outlined in the Communion guidelines issued in Phase I.

- Facial coverings are not strictly required if celebrating an outdoor Mass, but are still strongly encouraged.
- Restrooms should be made available for those attending outdoor Masses.
- In-car Masses are prohibited.

### 3. Reinstatement of the Sacraments of Initiation

*Archbishop Lori has temporarily delegated the faculty to Confirm baptized Catholics to pastors through December 31, 2020. The RCIA Sacraments of Initiation and First Communion of Children may be celebrated during Phase II. **Parish Confirmations of Youth may not be scheduled until further notice.***

*For those who have been in the RCIA process, Archbishop Lori has granted dispensation from the three Scrutiny Rites prior to Baptism.*

#### a. RCIA Sacraments of Initiation

- The celebration of Baptism begins after the homily.
- Place a bowl in the font prior to the blessing of the water so that the holy water can be easily disposed of in the sacrarium after Mass.
- If you have several candidates for initiation, make preparations prior to the liturgy to ensure that physical distancing requirements are enforced. This should require a special rehearsal or training session for those involved in the initiation process as well as the ushers.
- [RCIA 27] states: *As far as possible, the sacraments of initiation are to be celebrated on a Sunday, using, as the occasion suggests, the Sunday Mass or one of the ritual Masses “Christian Initiation Baptism”* See [RCIA 23, 26 and 208].
- Ensuring that the guidelines for physical distancing are observed, follow the guidelines for Baptism outlined in Phase I, using a shell or other vessel to pour water over the head(s) of the candidate(s) for Baptism.
- For the anointing, a cotton ball or swab should be used to apply the oil so that there is no physical contact between the minister and the candidate.
- Proceed with the Universal Prayer.
- The Creed is omitted when the Renewal of Baptismal Promises are used.
- Omit the Sprinkling Rite at [RCIA 240].
- The Liturgy of the Eucharist follows in the usual manner.

#### b. First Communion of Children

Acknowledging that some First Holy Communion groups might be quite large, and recognizing that young children will not be able to practice strict physical distancing, it might not be possible to hold First Holy Communion in one single Mass. It is recommended that children in need of First Holy Communion be invited to sit with their families at regular Sunday Masses. The pastor should determine how many families will be invited to a given Sunday Mass until all of the children have received First Holy Communion.

### **c. Parish Confirmations**

Although Archbishop Lori has delegated to pastors the faculty to Confirm in the Archdiocese of Baltimore through December 31, 2020, Parish Confirmations of Youth may not be scheduled until further notice.

Currently, no Archdiocesan Group Confirmation has been scheduled. Pastors are encouraged to include adults seeking Confirmation in the parish celebration when allowed.

### **4. Masses with ASL Interpreters for the Deaf**

- If a parish plans to resume Mass in person and would normally offer an ASL interpreted Mass, it should consider resuming this practice. This will depend on the availability and willingness of the ASL interpreter to attend Mass in person.
- If it is not possible to offer an ASL interpreted Mass in person, parishes should consider having an ASL interpreter for its online Mass. It is a current best practice to offer such online interpreted Masses using a “picture-in-picture” format.
- Facial expression is an integral part of ASL. Therefore, the ASL interpreter should not use a face covering when interpreting, but should use it at all other times. The interpreter should be placed in a position so that the movement of the hands and facial expression can be clearly seen, but not interfere with the congregation focusing on the liturgy.
- Due to the difficulties of sanitizing hand-held assistive listening devices for the Hard of Hearing after each use, parishes should consider making them available in a later phase of reopening.

## **IV. Clarifications of Phase I Directives**

### **1. Singing at Mass**

Phase I directives on singing at Mass remain in force. However, a cantor may sing if using a separate stand and microphone. He/she must wear a facial covering when not singing. Appropriate physical distancing of *more* than 6 feet from the assembly and accompanist should be observed.

### **2. Sign of Peace**

The invitations “*Let us offer each other the sign of peace.*” and the exchange of peace that follows are omitted.

### **3. Fraction of the Bread**

Prior to Mass, ministers with thoroughly disinfected hands may distribute unconsecrated bread among ciboria according to the needs of the gathered assembly. At the time of the ritual fractioning, the Priest or Deacon is encouraged to minimize touching consecrated hosts that will be distributed.

#### 4. Reception of Holy Communion

In view of the *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*<sup>1</sup> and the *Ad Hoc Committee of Catholic Doctors*<sup>2</sup> guidelines, and due to the concerns of many Pastors and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion regarding the practice of distributing Holy Communion on the tongue, we are encouraging Pastors to make the following or similar announcement prior to Communion asking for the faithful's patience and understanding.

Sample Announcement:

*The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has recommended against reception of Holy Communion on the tongue. More importantly, in response to God's command to love our brothers and sisters, and out of special concern for the vulnerable and our sacred ministers, communicants who normally receive on the tongue are respectfully asked to make a sacrifice of personal preference. Please prayerfully consider the reverent act of receiving in the hand.*

Ministers of Holy Communion may not deny Communion to those who insist on receiving on the tongue. Should anyone choose to do so, the Minister of Communion **must** sanitize his/her hands prior to distributing Communion to the next individual.

#### 5. Sanitation Procedures of the Communion Minister while Distributing Communion

- If the priest or Communion minister senses that his/her fingers have made contact with a person, he/she should pause, place the ciborium on the corporal, wipe his/her fingers on the purificator and use hand sanitizer.
- It is not necessary for the Communion minister to use hand sanitizer between each communicant who receives in the hand, unless the minister makes actual contact.

<sup>1</sup>Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/guidance-community-faith-organizations.html>

<sup>2</sup> *Ad hoc Committee of Catholic Doctors*, who work at the Yale University School of Medicine, the Mayo Clinic, Columbia University and UCLA: <https://www.cathmed.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Road-Map-to-Opening-Our-Churches12May20V2.pdf>



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