



DIOCESE OF BUFFALO  
OFFICE OF WORSHIP

## Supplemental Sacramental and Liturgical Directives Post-Coronavirus

The guidelines contained in the *Forward in Faith* and *Parish Playbook* documents previously issued by the Diocese of Buffalo remain in effect, and practices such as physical distancing, sanitization in between liturgies, and capacity limits all still apply and should follow the current norms as directed by local, state, and federal government.

The following is meant to supplement and inform the knowledge pastors and other parish leaders already may have in regards to the celebration of the Sacraments and other liturgical services.

### *Anointing of the Sick*

- Previous directives are in force
- Anointing may still be done with a cotton ball or cotton swab.

### *Baptism*

- For the time being, it is recommended that Baptisms be celebrated outside of Mass.
- Only parents and godparents, along with the minister of baptism, should gather around the font and physically distance when possible.
- Sacred Chrism should be applied by the minister using their ungloved thumb to the crown of the child.
  - Alcohol wipes should be available to sanitize the thumb, and they should be burned/buried after the liturgy. (See also Confirmation, below.)
  - It is recommended that the Anointing Before Baptism be omitted, but if it is not, the same procedure for the use of Chrism should be followed.
- The water in the font must be changed for each baptism, and so only one child per baptism may be scheduled at this time (unless twins or members of the same household are baptized).

## *Confirmation*

- Pastors may request the faculty to confirm teenage candidates at their discretion. Please contact the chancery for the proper form.
  - The Office of Worship will provide delegated pastors with assistance in the celebration of the rite, and a basic outline is attached.
- Sponsors may accompany the candidate when approaching the altar to be anointed, but should stand at least six feet apart from them (unless members of the same household).
- When celebrating the sacrament, the minister should use their ungloved thumb to apply the Sacred Chrism to the forehead of the candidate.
  - In between candidates, they should have alcohol wipes available to sanitize their thumb.
  - Following the liturgy, the wipes used should be burned/buried.

## *First Communion*

- There should be no processions of first communicants in or out of the church.
- As a reminder, gloves should not be worn to receive the Eucharist.
- Masks are required at Mass (as outlined previously), but as the first communicant leaves their pew to receive the Eucharist and until they return, they need not wear their mask.
- The Precious Blood **should not** be administered, whether by chalice or intinction.
- Group photos should be discouraged; as an alternative families could submit photos of their first communicant to create a “yearbook style” class photo or online gallery. (Be sure to obtain the family’s permission.)
- Pastors may wish to have a designated area outside for photo opportunities with individual communicants.

### *First Reconciliation and Regular Confessions*

- Use space in the church or larger rooms that could be established for Reconciliation with the option to go face to face or not. (Eg. crying room could be repurposed.)
  - Consider using three chairs, one for the confessor, and one in front of (face to face) and one behind him (“traditional”); the lack of kneelers and partitions requires less sanitization.
  - Provide disinfecting wipes and encourage penitents to wipe down their chair and/or any door handles as the exit.
  - Ensure privacy by playing soft music if utilizing the open space in the church.
- For First Reconciliation:
  - Try to use the church building as opposed to “overflow” into the church hall or other areas — this may require smaller groups of penitents.
  - Masks should be worn by the confessors at all times, but may be optional for the penitent at the time of their confession, at the discretion of their parents.

### *Holy Matrimony*

- Processions should be limited to the maid of honor and the bride (perhaps accompanied by a parent), or the bride and groom together.
  - The congregation may be encouraged to sit toward the middle of the pews/away from the main aisle, as adapted for the architecture of the church.
  - Throughout the Mass, the congregation should wear masks, as at other Masses. The bride need not wear a mask for the procession.
  - Other members of the wedding party should already be in place when the wedding begins.
- Some couples may opt for smaller weddings in 2020 and wish to have a “vow renewal” in 2021
  - Liturgically, this should be limited to a (Sunday) Mass of Thanksgiving with an anniversary blessing. It should not entail all the pomp and circumstance of the wedding itself that couples may desire. This is meant to highlight the singularity of the sacramental celebration.
- Outdoor weddings are generally prohibited in the Diocese of Buffalo because of the importance of celebrating the sacrament at a permanent, immovable altar.

## RCIA

- As a sign of unity among the candidates who, in many cases, have journeyed together as a small “community within a community,” the RCIA should not be celebrated piecemeal. That is, everyone who was ready to be received at the Easter Vigil should now be given an opportunity to enter full communion.
- The RCIA should be celebrated in the context of a weekend liturgy, at which a great number of the parish community will be present.
  - It should be communicated in advance to the community that the liturgy including the RCIA will be longer than usual.
- As a further sign of solidarity, and based on the Scriptural themes of the weekend readings, the Diocese of Buffalo has identified a preferred Sunday, August 2, 2020, the Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, as the day when most RCIA candidates should be received into the Church.
  - If candidates / families / parishes have challenges scheduling on August 2<sup>nd</sup>, the Fifteenth Sunday (July 12<sup>th</sup>), or the Seventeenth Sunday (July 26<sup>th</sup>) may also be used.
  - Please contact the chancery to obtain proper faculties and to notify the diocese of the date chosen.
  - Since these Sundays are in Ordinary Time, the orations from the ritual Masses for “Christian Initiation” should be used. *The Easter Vigil orations/readings are not to be used.*
- Scrutinies may be celebrated at a weekday Mass or as part of a Liturgy of the Word.
- The normative rite to be used begins at:
  - RCIA #218 (Elect Only)
  - RCIA #487 (Candidates for Full Reception Only)
  - RCIA #566 (Both)
- These are the same rites that would be used at the Easter Vigil. (The rite for “exceptional circumstances” should not be used in this case.)
  - Be cautious about consulting Part III of the Easter Vigil in the Roman Missal, as this is written specifically for the Easter Vigil, and things like carrying the Paschal Candle and the faithful holding lighted candles during the profession of faith are particular to that celebration.
- If you have more than one elect, please consult the Office of Worship on how best to facilitate Baptism.

## *Funerals*

- Memorial Masses for those buried at the height of the COVID-19 crisis without the benefit of a Mass of Christian Burial should be scheduled at the family's discretion.
- However, it may be helpful for pastors and parishes to develop a calendar of possible dates and reach out to families with a few options.
- Saturday morning may be a particular preference for families, but weekdays/ evenings are options as well. Be sure that regularly scheduled events like First Communion / First Reconciliations are examined in context with these needs, as well as the work-life balance of the clergy / pastoral staff.