

Christian Initiation

This is the reality of Baptism: he, the Risen One, comes; he comes to you and joins his life with yours, drawing you into the open fire of his love. (Pope Benedict XVI, Homily, Easter Vigil 2008)

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults [RCIA]

- Masses for Christian Initiation of Adults should be celebrated in accordance with established directives governing the celebration of public liturgy during the pandemic.
- The RCIA is inherently flexible, and the rite itself permits wide latitude in the scheduling of initiation liturgies. This latitude should fully be utilized (c.f. RCIA # 146-147, 208).
- The Second and Third Scrutinies are dispensed for the Elect for the 2020 liturgical year (RCIA 34.3).
- All RCIA rituals (including Presentations of the Our Father and the Creed; Baptism-Confirmation-First Communion; Reception into Full Communion; Mystagogy) should be celebrated with physical distancing of a minimum of six feet apart in all directions between individual worshippers/family groups when seated in the nave and throughout the celebration.

- Advise the Elect, candidates for full communion, and godparents/sponsors that unusual measures will be taken to avoid passing any contagions during the Initiation rituals and ask their cooperation. Request that the smallest number of individuals be present to maintain physical distancing of a minimum of six feet apart in all directions between individual worshippers/family groups.
- The minister, the Elect, candidates for full communion, and godparents/sponsors should all wash their hands thoroughly with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds before and after Mass. The minister should refrain from touching his face throughout the ritual(s).

Liturgy of the Word

- The Liturgy of the Word should be celebrated in accordance with established directives governing the celebration of public liturgy during the pandemic.

Baptism

- The optional anointing with the Oil of Catechumens should be considered for omission. If it is retained, administer the holy oil with a cotton ball or swab which will then be disposed of in a closed container, and later burned or buried.
- Use fresh water that has been blessed for the Baptism. The minister should use a pitcher to pour the water, not his hands. The water should be poured into a receiving vessel, so that the water poured over the person being baptized does not come into contact with any other individuals. Following the baptism, the blessed water should be poured directly into the ground (not into the sacrarium).
- The post-baptismal anointing with Chrism is not optional. Administer the holy oil with a cotton ball or swab which will then be disposed of in a closed container, and later burned or buried.
- If there are several people who will be baptized, do not reuse the same water. Have a pitcher or basin with enough freshly blessed water in it to baptize each person.

Confirmation

NEW!
June 9

- The minister should be masked for the anointings.
- The Laying on of Hands should be done without physical contact, regardless of the number of individuals being confirmed.
- The anointing with Chrism is not optional and must be done. Wash hands with warm, soapy water immediately before the anointings. The celebrant may administer the holy oil with the thumb or with a cotton ball or swab.¹ If the thumb is used, wipe and sanitize hands between each anointing. If a cotton ball or swab is used, collect these for burial or burning after the liturgy.

¹ Thiron, Rita. FDLC Memo June 9, 2020, 8:37 a.m. "As you know, the USCCB Committee on Divine Worship sent a formal dubium to the Vatican inquiring about the use of a cotton ball or other instrument during the anointing in the celebration of the sacrament of Confirmation. The request was received at the Vatican on May 19.

Question: Would Confirmation be valid if the anointing was conferred with an instrument?

In a letter dated June 2, the Congregation replied as follows: "The use by the minister of an instrument (gloves, cotton swab...), does not affect the validity of the Sacrament." This simple response was sent to all United States Bishops on June 8. The USCCB Secretariat noted that the liturgical text clearly expects the minister in normal circumstances to anoint with the thumb. But if the Code permits anointing with an instrument only in grave circumstances [in the Anointing of the Sick], the same standard would hold for Confirmation. Most would agree that this pandemic would qualify as grave circumstances."

- The Sign of Peace should be exchanged without physical contact.
- Following the Anointings, the minister should use hand sanitizer or wash their hands.

First Communion

- First Communion should be celebrated in accordance with established directives governing the celebration of public liturgy during the pandemic.

Order of Baptism of Children

No one deserves baptism, which is always a gift for everyone, adults and newborns. But like what happens to a seed full of life, this gift takes root and brings forth fruit in a land nourished by faith. (Pope Francis, weekly general audience in St. Peter's Square, April 11, 2018)

- **The ritual book *The Order of Baptism of Children, second edition*, published in 2020 should be used for the baptismal ritual.**
- If the baptism(s) will occur during Mass, the entire liturgy should be celebrated in accordance with established directives governing the celebration of public liturgy during the pandemic.
- Advise the parents and/or godparents that unusual measures will be taken to avoid passing any contagions during the baptism and ask their cooperation. Request that the smallest number of individuals be present to maintain physical distancing of a minimum of six feet apart in all directions between individual worshippers/family groups.
- The minister, parents, and godparents should all wash their hands thoroughly with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds before and after the baptismal ritual. The minister should refrain from touching his face throughout the ritual.
- Have hand sanitizer ready. The minister, parents, and godparents should all use hand sanitizer before and after tracing the Sign of the Cross on the forehead of the child to be baptized.
- The optional anointing with the Oil of Catechumens should be considered for omission. If it is retained, administer the holy oil with a cotton ball or swab which will then be disposed of in a closed container, and later burned or buried.
- Use fresh water that has been blessed for the Baptism. The minister should use a pitcher to pour the water, not his hands. The water should be poured into a receiving vessel, so that the water poured over the person being baptized does not come into contact with any other individuals. Following the baptism, the blessed water should be poured directly into the ground (not into the sacrarium).
- If there are several children who will be baptized, do not reuse the same water.
- The post-baptismal anointing with Chrism is not optional. Administer the holy oil with a cotton ball or swab which will then be disposed of in a closed container, and later burned or buried.
- The optional Ephatha (*sic*) Rite should be omitted unless it is done without physical contact.
- If the baptism(s) occur during Mass, the remainder of the Liturgy should be celebrated in accordance with established directives governing the celebration of public liturgy during the pandemic.

First Communion (for Catholics baptized in infancy)

With the Eucharist, therefore, heaven comes down to earth, the tomorrow of God descends into the present and it is as if time remains embraced by divine eternity. (Pope Benedict XVI, Homily, Corpus Christi, June 12, 2009)

- First Communion Masses should be celebrated in accordance with established directives governing the celebration of public liturgy during the pandemic.

Confirmation (for Catholics baptized in infancy)

How do we see if we have received the gift of the Spirit? If we fulfill the works of the Spirit, if we speak with words taught by the Spirit. Christian witness consists of doing only and everything that the Spirit of Christ asks us while granting us the strength to do it. (Pope Francis, weekly general audience in St. Peter's Square, May 22, 2018)

- Confirmation Masses should be celebrated in accordance with established directives governing the celebration of public liturgy during the pandemic.
- The Laying on of Hands should be done without physical contact, regardless of the number of individuals being confirmed.
- The anointing with Chrism is not optional and must be done. Wash hands with warm, soapy water immediately before the anointings. Administer the holy oil with an ungloved thumb (unless/until the Vatican *dubium* response says differently, see [FDLC website](#)). Wipe and sanitize hands between each anointing.
- The Sign of Peace should be exchanged without physical contact.
- Following the Anointings, the minister and the confirmandi should use hand sanitizer or wash their hands.

Reconciliation/Rite of Penance/Confession

I invite priests once more to prepare carefully for the ministry of Confession, which is a true priestly mission. I thank all of you from the heart for your ministry, and I ask you to be welcoming to all, witnesses of fatherly tenderness whatever the gravity of the sin involved, attentive in helping penitents to reflect on the wrong they have done, clear in presenting moral principles, willing to walk patiently beside the faithful on their penitential journey, far-sighted in discerning individual cases, and generous in dispensing God's forgiveness. (Pope Francis, Misericordia et misera, no. 10)

Providing the sacrament of penance is an important and essential way in which we minister the healing and merciful love of God. Every consideration should be given to offering the Sacrament of Reconciliation to individuals who request it. To help minimize the risk of exposure, we ask for the following considerations to be utilized:

- Move out of the confessional into the body of the church or, if weather permits, outside, to provide a safer space between you and the penitent.
- If possible, utilize a screen to block the air flow between the priest and the penitent. The penitent should always have the option to celebrate the Sacrament anonymously.
- Ensure at least six feet of space between the presider and the penitent.
- It is preferable to either use a chair without armrests or to clean the armrests with sanitizer between each person. You may also consider celebrating the Sacrament standing so that a proper distance is kept, and no surfaces are touched.
- If you hear confessions from multiple penitents back-to-back, please ensure disinfecting wipes are available and used between each person's confession.

It may be helpful to remind parishioners who request confession of Pope Francis' recent remarks, which echo the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*:

The pope said..., "Do what the Catechism (of the Catholic Church) says. It is very clear: If you cannot find a priest to confess to, speak directly with God, your father, and tell him the truth. Say, 'Lord, I did this, this, this. Forgive me,' and ask for pardon with all your heart."

Make an act of contrition, the pope said, and promise God, "'I will go to confession afterward, but forgive me now.' And immediately you will return to a state of grace with God."

The Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1452, says: "When it arises from a love by which God is loved above all else, contrition is called 'perfect' - contrition of charity. Such contrition remits venial sins: it also obtains forgiveness of mortal sins if it includes the firm resolution to have recourse to sacramental confession as soon as possible."

"As the catechism teaches," Pope Francis said, "you can draw near to God's forgiveness without having a priest at hand."

Order of Celebrating Matrimony (Weddings)

Dear married couples, by means of a special gift of the Holy Spirit, Christ gives you a share in His spousal love, making you a sign of His faithful and all-embracing love for the Church. If you can receive this gift, renewing your "yes" each day by faith, with the strength that comes from the grace of the sacrament, then your family will grow in God's love according to the model of the Holy Family of Nazareth. (Pope Benedict XVI, Homily, Seventh World Meeting of Families, June 2, 2012)

Weddings should be celebrated in accordance with established directives governing the celebration of public liturgy during the pandemic.

Pastoral Care of the Sick

Jesus does not make demands of those who endure situations of frailty, suffering and weakness, but offers his mercy and his comforting presence. He looks upon a wounded humanity with eyes that gaze into the heart of each person. That gaze is not one of indifference; rather, it embraces people in their entirety, each person in his or her health condition, discarding no one, but rather inviting everyone to share in his life and to experience his tender love. (Pope Francis, World Day of the Sick, February 11, 2020)

The diocesan offices are working with area medical systems and local chaplains to provide greater clarity and formation on the sacramental care of the sick and dying during the pandemic. The guidelines below reflect guidelines issued by the Office of the Diocesan Administrator in March 2020 and will continue to be updated as new information becomes available.

Keeping Contact With those who are Homebound, Sick or Infirm and All Your Parishioners

Here are some thoughts about what you can do to help your parishioners feel cared for and connected during this difficult and perplexing time:

- Expand outreach by making phone calls to homebound parishioners and local nursing home residents and assure them of your prayers, thoughts and best wishes
- Offer to pray with people over the phone.
- Organize individuals to go grocery shopping for others who should stay home. You can always leave groceries at the doorsteps of those most vulnerable but also in need of basic necessities and food.
- Our homeless neighbors will be encountering greater hunger as local restaurants, food pantries and catering companies cut back. Encourage your parishioners to donate to local food banks or the St. Vincent DePaul Society, and to continue to be generous to the church so that we can care for those in greatest need.
- Think about video streaming messages, homilies or prayers for others and utilize Facebook, Twitter and other social media to share them with your parishioners.

Holy Communion to the Sick and Homebound – non COVID-19 patient

We urge you to use extreme caution. If you are a high-risk priest or deacon, you are instructed to

refrain from taking communion to the sick. All other clergy should use extreme caution to protect themselves from the contagion. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion [EMHCs] are not permitted to take Holy Communion to the sick for the duration of the pandemic for their good and the good of their families.

- If the visit is in a hospital environment, follow the hospital directives regarding personal hygiene (washing hands, etc.).
- Most nursing facilities are under quarantine. Please contact the nursing home staff for directives for attending to the sick and dying. If the communion call is in a nursing facility, avoid visiting to limit potential hazards to the most vulnerable population.
- If the visit should someone's home:
 - ✓ Wash hands or use a hand sanitizer once you enter the home.
 - ✓ Avoid any physical contact with the person or family during the visit.
 - ✓ Use a hand sanitizer again before distributing Communion.
 - ✓ If the communicant usually receives Communion on the tongue, strongly encourage him or her, for your safety as well as theirs, to receive Communion in the hand
 - ✓ Wash or sanitize your hands after the visit.
- Maintain physical distancing of a minimum of six feet apart in all directions from everyone in the room, except the patient.
- Do not offer comfort with any physical contact.

Anointing of the Sick – non COVID-19 patient

If the sacrament is celebrated in a health care facility, follow the protocols and protective guidelines of the facility.

- Maintain physical distancing of a minimum of six feet apart in all directions with everyone in the room, except the patient.
- Do not offer comfort with any physical contact.
- Wash or sanitize your hands once you enter the room.
- The anointing may be done with a cotton ball or swab which should be burned or buried after use.
- If Holy Communion is given, it should be distributed in the hand.
- Sanitize your hands after the visit.

Ministering the Sacraments to a confirmed COVID-19 patient

Restrictions for who may provide sacramental ministry to confirmed COVID-19 patients:

- No priest in the high-risk group or those over 60 years old
- No priest with chronic illnesses, e.g. heart issues, diabetes, Crohn's, cancer, rheumatoid arthritis, asthma, COPD
- These restrictions are in place following the healthcare guidance that indicate younger, healthier individuals are at a diminished risk of contracting a serious case of coronavirus.

Jesus calls us to be as present as possible to people in these circumstances lest they feel abandoned or isolated in a moment of need. They should know the love of God through us. Let us remember very clearly the words of Jesus when he taught us the Corporal Works of Mercy: “I was naked, and you clothed me. I was sick, and you took care of me. I was in prison, and you visited me.” Matthew 25:26 Our faith requires us to continue the ministry of our Lord Jesus – including anointing of the sick – ensuring that all appropriate hospital protocols are followed. (Check with the nurse’s station before entering patient rooms if you have any questions). Additionally, we will continue to provide pastoral care to people who are homebound or quarantined. However, there are key items to consider:

Any minister who does not wish to carry out this ministry – for whatever reason – may be excused by contacting their supervisor. The supervisor (pastor, parish administrator, chaplain) should ensure another person provides the pastoral care to hospitalized, homebound, or quarantined individuals. This ministry should not cease without notification of superiors and appropriate follow-through.

It is particularly helpful for all homebound visitors to call ahead to ensure the individual is still accepting visitors. Pro-active communication will help confirm that individuals and families desire such visits.

It is most important that all home-bound visitors practice the highest sanitary precautions, including excellent hand washing, when carrying out their ministry.

If clergy or pastoral ministers are preparing to visit someone who is showing symptoms – or if you are called to anoint an individual who has coronavirus in a homebound situation – you should follow these guidelines:

- The minister should wash hands and use proper hand sanitizer gel protocols.
- The minister should wear a disposable mask and disposable gloves. Follow WHO guidelines for safe use of masks and gloves (<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public/when-and-how-to-use-masks>).
- If possible, the minister should wear a gown to cover clothes.
- When anointing with the Oil of the Sick, administer the holy oil with a cotton ball or swab which should then be disposed of in a closed container, and later burned or buried.
- The minister should not linger in the room (less than 15 minutes).
- Any minister who has had unprotected close contact with someone who has the coronavirus (by not following the guidelines above) should self-quarantine for two weeks.

Ministers may encounter situations where they are denied access to facilities. In this situation, we recommend calling the individuals directly and praying with them, and/or writing letters and sending cards to them.

Order of Christian Funerals

The right to weep should not be denied. Even Jesus was deeply moved and profoundly troubled by the bereavement of a family he loved. We can, instead, draw from the simple and powerful witness of many families who have known how to grasp, in the difficult passage of death, also the safe passage offered by the Lord, crucified and risen, with his irrevocable promise of the resurrection of the dead. The work of God's love is stronger than the work of death. We should seek to be 'accomplices' to that love, with our faith. ... Death was defeated by Jesus on the cross. Jesus will restore all of us to our families. (Pope Francis, general audience, St. Peter's Square, June 17, 2015)

Funeral Masses should be celebrated in accordance with established directives governing the celebration of public liturgy during the pandemic.

These sacramental directives are in effect temporarily and will be updated as new information becomes available. Please continue to refer to this document on the diocesan website as we move forward with Christ in the public celebration of the sacraments.