

ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF ALBANY

Specific Instructions for the Celebration of Funerals, Weddings and Baptisms

(as of 5/21/20)

*The instructions given below are simply a supplement to the **Guidelines for the Gradual Reintroduction of Public Liturgies and Worship, Initial Stage**, that are being published today by the Diocese. The instructions below come into effect IMMEDIATELY, but they are ONLY for the celebration of funerals, weddings and baptisms. As indicated in the memo of 5/20/20 from the Chancery, a date for the reintroduction of other liturgies, most especially other Masses celebrated in public, will be given shortly.*

FUNERALS

1. A public Funeral Mass may be celebrated, provided that all governmental/health directives and guidelines are followed (currently no more than 10 persons present).
2. There are some elements particular to the Funeral Mass
 - a. The usual entrance rites and other rites (Final Commendation, sprinkling with holy water, incensing etc.) should be observed, but the optional placing of the pall should be omitted
 - b. Pall bearers may accompany the casket into the church and as the casket is taken from the church.

WEDDINGS

1. The public celebration of weddings is permitted, provided that the current governmental/health guidelines and directives are observed. In particular, this relates to the numbers present (currently no more than 10 persons present) and social distancing.
2. For further, general liturgical details and protocols, please refer to the section of this document on the Eucharist.
3. The wedding liturgy has particular elements that will require attention, namely:
 - a. The bride and groom would not be required to wear a face mask (they are the ministers of the sacrament)
 - b. The procession takes place in the usual way
 - c. The usual parts of the Rite itself should be observed
 - d. Avoid any unnecessary touching of objects such as the wedding rings
 - e. Programs/worship aids are not advised

BAPTISMS

The following relates mainly to the baptism of infants or children; that is, those under the age of discretion (cf. Order of Baptism of Children, Introduction, 1). Additionally, some elements apply to adults where there is a grave necessity, such as the danger of death.

Given health and governmental directives (especially social distancing, hygiene/sanitizing, etc.) and the need to protect the most vulnerable medically, the baptism of infants in our current situation presents some particular factors and difficulties:

- On the one hand, the Church requires that the sacrament should be celebrated within the first few weeks of an infant being born (cf. CIC, can. 867). Any liturgical directives cannot contradict universal Church or liturgical law(s).
- However, in practice, we know that there is often a much longer period than this before a baptism takes place.
- Particular factors impacting a pastoral decision that wishes to respect Canon Law as well as governmental directives relate to the liturgical dynamics of baptism. Such factors are, of course, issues such as maintaining social distance and sanitizing.

Therefore:

As is happening already, pastors and parish leaders should discuss the situation with the family and assure them that, if the need should arise, anyone may baptize in the case of necessity (see #3 below).

1. During this exceptional time, if there is a pastoral need for the baptism of an infant to take place, only the necessary rites for a valid Baptism should be celebrated, (CIC, can. 850). Details can be found in the Order of Baptism of Children. Only the minister, infant, parents and godparents should be present (again, social distance, hygiene etc. should be followed as far as possible within the liturgy).
2. At this stage of reopening, baptisms during Mass should NOT take place.
3. In the case of an emergency, anyone may baptize as long as the pouring of water and the valid Trinitarian formula: "N. I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" is used (CIC, can. 861, section 2, and *Order for the Baptism of Children*).
4. In whatever way and wherever the sacrament is celebrated, please remember that a proper record should be kept and it must be recorded in the appropriate place (the parish within which the baptism took place: CIC, can. 877)
5. If a baptism is celebrated without the pastor being present, he should be notified so that the necessary record can be made in the parish register (CIC, can. 878).