

ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF ALBANY

Liturgical Updates

(June 29, 2020)

REMINDERS:

- The various provisions of the Guidelines issued on May 21st remain in force, except where there is an adaptation or relaxation of protocols, as indicated in the updates below, including ability for public liturgies at up to 33% capacity, and in keeping with social distancing requirements
- ANY liturgy taking place in a church building (such as weddings, baptisms, funerals, as well as weekday or Sunday Masses) should follow the various guidelines, protocols and parish plan: hygiene (sanitizing/washing hands, face masks), social distancing/church capacity, contact tracing, sanitizing, etc.
- Reopening Plans for the various parishes should be submitted to the local Episcopal Vicar for review and approval before being implemented

UPDATES:

I. BAPTISMS

The following relates to the baptism of infants or children; that is, those under the age of discretion (cf. Order of Baptism of Children, Introduction, I). Additionally, some elements apply to adults where there is a grave necessity, such as the danger of death. For the initiation of adults (especially initiation delayed from the Easter Vigil), see the letter issued by Bishop Scharfenberger on May 12, 2020

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:

1. The baptism of children/infants may take place following the usual rites. A reminder that the revised Order of Baptism of Children is now mandatory (as of Easter 2020). The parish plan/protocols such as maintaining social distance, hygiene (such as face masks, hand sanitizing), contact tracing, sanitizing etc. should be followed (see "reminders" above).

2. Where possible, only one baptism should take place at any celebration (unless several children/infants from one household are to be baptized).
3. Where this is not possible, extra care should be taken to avoid the possibility of transmitting the virus. In such cases, extra though must be given to the objects or vessels that will be used, as well as how the baptismal water would be treated. For example, only the priest or deacon administering the sacrament should handle any objects or vessels and the two anointings may be carried out using a swab.

NOTE: If a priest is administering the Sacrament of Confirmation (as permitted by Canon Law and with any necessary permission), the priest may use an implement to anoint. This question or *dubium* was answered recently:

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."

II. FUNERALS:

1. A public Funeral Mass may be celebrated, provided that ALL governmental/health directives, liturgical guidelines and the parish plan are followed (see "reminders" above). For general liturgical details and protocols, please refer to the section of this document on the Eucharist
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.

III. WEDDINGS:

1. A public Wedding Mass or ceremony may be celebrated, provided that ALL governmental/health directives, liturgical guidelines and the parish plan are followed (see "reminders" above). For general liturgical details and protocols, please refer to the section of this document on the Eucharist
2. A reminder that in the Diocese of Albany it is possible, in certain cases, to celebrate a wedding ceremony (not Mass) outside of a church building. The process for doing this can be found via the Diocesan portal; Tribunal Office section.
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

IV. ANOINTING OF THE SICK & VISITS WITH THE EUCHARIST:

1. Where an **anointing** is given to a person in isolation (in a hospital, for example) all physical contact precautions should be taken and governmental/medical regulations followed. Hospitals and nursing homes should allow those in danger of death to be anointed, but protective gear must be worn by the priest and the visit kept short.
2. For **anointing** in such cases as above, or where there is some danger of infection, do not bring in any items (such as books, bags etc.). Photocopy any necessary prayers and leave the photocopies behind in the room. Avoid touching any objects in the room. It is not necessary to lay on hands directly during the anointing and a Q-tip or swab may be used to anoint the forehead (only). The Q-tip or swab, since it has blessed oil, should be disposed of appropriately. For more details, see the Thomistic Institute document (link below).
3. **Pastoral visits**, for example with Holy Communion, to people in **care/nursing homes or hospitals** are permitted by clergy or designated ministers. These visits should follow the current protocols and advice of the care home or hospital (this may involve ministers being tested for the coronavirus or antibodies). Again, strict protocols of hygiene/sanitizing, face masks etc. before, during and after visits must be observed.
4. Additionally, pastoral visits (for example with Holy Communion) by clergy or designated ministers to **shut-ins** are also now permitted. However, it may be that many shut-ins, who obviously almost always are in the vulnerable category, would prefer NOT to have visits at this time. A discussion between the pastor/parish leader or the parish pastoral care coordinator and the person potentially to be visited should take place BEFORE any visit.
5. As with any form of visit or interaction, all the various protocols (face mask, social distancing, sanitizing etc.) must be observed. Given the summer months, it may be possible to visit some shut-ins who wish for a visit, without entering the house or apartment.
6. BEFORE any visit to a care/nursing home, hospital or shut-in, ministers must be given appropriate training in the various protocols to be followed. This training may be given by a suitable person: pastor/parish leader, pastoral care staff member, Parish Pandemic Safety Officer etc.
7. For further details and guidelines about pastoral visits to shut-ins, hospitals and care/nursing homes, see Addendum B of the Reopening Document of May 21, 2020.
8. Detailed instructions on anointing and pastoral care of the sick may also be found in the following link (click on the tab for the anointing of the sick document):
<https://thomisticinstitute.org/covid-sacraments>

OTHER UPDATES OR NEWS

There are some newly released texts for various feasts and memoriae. These can be found on the USCCB website (www.USCCB.org/about/divine-worship/liturgical-calendar). Texts include:

A Preface for the (now) feast day of Saint Mary Magdalene (22nd July)

Proper texts for the Mass and a Second Reading for the Office of Readings for the optional memoria of St. John XXIII (11th October)

Proper texts for the Mass and a Second Reading for the Office of Readings for the optional memoria of St. John Paul II (22nd October)

You may have seen the notable decision made by Federal Judge Gary Sharpe on Friday, June 26 regarding NYS rules for houses of worship during this period of reopening the State. The judgement does, of course, have implications for the Diocesan Reopening Guidelines. The judgement affects the numbers permitted for both indoor and outdoor religious services. The judgement blocks any restrictions on numbers for outdoor religious services, provided that social distancing etc. are maintained. The judge also ruled that houses of worship cannot be treated differently than businesses in terms of percentages of building capacity.

The latter part of this judgement therefore has a number of implications, particularly regarding percentages of church building capacity. However, in practical terms, the judgement may not affect our current practice of voluntarily following NYS and other health protocols, in this case with regard to indoor Masses and other liturgies. While a higher percentage of occupancy or capacity is now permitted in the judgement, social distancing protocols should still be followed. It is difficult to generalize, but as we have experienced in our parishes, maintaining social distancing during liturgies effectively means that the maximum capacity of a church building is around 25-30%; sometimes less than this, due to the configuration of seating in the church.