



*Resumption of Public Liturgies in  
the Time of Public Health Concern  
Sunday/Weekday Mass  
Directives and Guidelines for the  
Diocese of Youngstown ~ March 2021*

In light of improving circumstances, a reduction in infections, and more people being vaccinated, the following revised Directives and Guidance for Public Liturgies in the Time of Public Health Concern for Sunday and Weekday Mass is being issued for all parishes of the Diocese of Youngstown. These take into consideration how to best proceed under the current circumstances while remaining pastorally sensitive to the People of God and adhering to restrictions currently in place in the State of Ohio. The guidance aims to clarify how such spiritual care can be responsibly offered to the faithful and have been formulated with great care to preserve and respect the powerful liturgical and sacramental symbolism of the rites of the Mass. These directives and guidance currently remain in effect by order of Bishop Bonnar and will be revised or changed should any further directives be issued or rescinded by the Governor of Ohio, the Bishops of Ohio, or Bishop Bonnar. These are considered to be temporary until it is deemed appropriate to return to normal circumstances.

**DISPENSATION FROM THE OBLIGATION TO ATTEND SUNDAY MASS**

On March 16, 2021, Bishop Bonnar issued a letter to the Diocese stating that the dispensation from Sunday Mass obligation remains in place for the foreseeable future.

*The Catholic faithful who reside in the Diocese of Youngstown and all other Catholics in the diocese and especially those who are sick, or at high risk of becoming sick continue to be dispensed from their Sunday Mass obligation until further notice.*

However as more and more social aspects of life approach normalcy along with an increase in people being vaccinated, those who are able should consider returning to worship.

➤ **General Guidelines**

1. It remains important that those who are at greater risk, those who have serious health concerns, either for themselves or for someone in their immediate care, can refrain from returning until such time they feel comfortable and confident to do so.
2. Those who are symptomatic or who have been exposed to another with the virus within 14 days are advised not attend Mass in accordance with national, state, and local health directives.
3. Parishes that have been live-streaming Mass so that those unable to attend may maintain a spiritual connection with their local parish are encouraged to continue this service.
4. Appropriate cleaning of high use areas within the church is to be maintained on a regular basis and access to hand sanitizer should continue to be provided.
5. The wearing of face-coverings by all in attendance remains mandatory until further notice.
6. Every effort to ensure appropriate physical distancing before, during, and after liturgical celebrations is required. Methods will vary depending on capacity and arrangement of church buildings. Parishes will decide how best to configure seating to maintain proper physical distance.
7. Cry Rooms or enclosed spaces for families with small children can be used with reduced capacity that maintains appropriate physical distancing.
8. Large gatherings before or after Mass are still to be discouraged for the time being.
9. Limits on the amount of people able to be in restrooms should be maintained.
10. All in attendance should wash their hands before and after Mass being mindful not to touch their face, eyes, or nose.
11. All in attendance should make every effort to continually model and encourage good hygienic practices.

➤ **During Mass**

Holy Water

- Given the understanding that transmission of the virus through surfaces/objects is highly improbable or unlikely, consideration can be given to returning holy water to fonts with the understanding that holy water will be changed weekly and fonts will be cleaned and disinfected. Baptismal fonts with pools that have treated chlorinated water can be returned to use.

### Hymnals/Missalettes

- Given the understanding that transmission of the virus through surfaces/objects is highly improbable or unlikely, consideration can be given to returning hymnals for use.

### Offertory Collection

- The use of traditional long-handled baskets for the collection by ushers is permitted or a stationary basket at the entrance of the church for worshippers to drop their offering at the beginning of Mass can continue. The practice of passing individual baskets through the assembly should not be considered at this time.

### The Lord's Prayer and Sign of Peace

- Physical contact during the Lord's Prayer and the Sign of Peace among non-immediate family members is discouraged. For the Sign of Peace those present are encouraged to bow to others and offer words of peace.

### Receiving Holy Communion

- Other than as Viaticum to the critically ill, Holy Communion is to be given in the context of Mass. If this is not possible, Holy Communion may be given outside of Mass according to the approved rites. (*i.e. Liturgy of the Word with Communion*). The distribution of Holy Communion immediately after Mass, rather than during, is prohibited.
- It is highly encouraged and strongly recommended that the reception of Holy Communion be given in the hand. While reception of Holy Communion on the tongue cannot be prohibited it is discouraged at this time.

### *Distribution of Holy Communion on the Tongue*

- Out of pastoral necessity and urgency, those desiring to receive Holy Communion on the tongue are permitted to do so. In this instance, they are to be last in line and receive only from the priest. In the unfortunate circumstance that the priest's fingers come in contact with the mouth and/or saliva of the communicant he must immediately sanitize his fingers before continuing with the next in line.

- Reception of the Precious Blood from the chalice by the assembly continues to be suspended. Accommodation should be made for low-gluten hosts to be available for those with gluten intolerance.

- The location of stations for the distribution of Holy Communion should be considered to facilitate orderly movement and to maintain proper physical distance. One-way traffic patterns are encouraged.
- Appropriate spacing between individuals in the Communion Procession is to be maintained.
- Holy Communion is not to be distributed with gloves, nor may it be received in the hand with gloves.
- When approaching the minister, the communicant is pulls their face covering below their chin. After saying, "The Body of Christ," the minister carefully places the host into the hand of the communicant avoiding any incidental contact. Communicants, after responding "Amen," reverently place the host in their mouth and replace their mask.

Parishioners are asked to contact their parish with any further questions or the Office of Worship 330-744-8451 ext. 282.