



Diocese of Birmingham in Alabama

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Very Reverend Justin L. Ward, S.T.L
Vicar for Sacred Liturgy

MEMORANDUM

To: Priests, Deacons, and Diocesan Personnel
From: Fr. Justin Ward, Vicar for Sacred Liturgy
Date: May 5, 2021
RE: Liturgical Protocols in the Diocese of Birmingham

Effective Monday, May 24, 2021, Bishop Steven J. Raica establishes the following liturgical protocols to guide parishes and institutions for the transition to fuller participation of the faithful at parish and institutional Masses and events. As long as COVID remains a concern, modifications of these protocols may occur from time to time.

- It is expected that all parish communities restore as full a liturgical schedule as possible of weekend Masses, daily Masses and other sacramental celebrations as existed prior to the pandemic. [Also, parish office hours and the many elements of parish life can resume.]
- Outdoor celebrations of the Mass should cease, except those that are typically for special events. Otherwise, all liturgical celebrations should be brought back into the sacred buildings.
- Drive thru Holy Communion options should cease. Provisions should be made for those who need to receive Holy Communion at times other than during Mass with the priest, deacon, or Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion. The Sacrament should be administered in accordance with the proper liturgical books.
- Hymnals, missalettes and other printed resources may again be used by parishioners and kept in the pew racks as was done prior to the pandemic.
- Pastors and administrators should be attentive to the CDC, as well as state, and local county/city health directives regarding mask wearing and/or social distancing recommendations. Parishes should not mandate requirements beyond what local directives require except for serious reason. Many who are either concerned or vulnerable may individually choose to continue to remain masked when around others, regardless of the county/city directives are not masked. Our response should be characterized by mutual respect for one another.
- Pew ropes/separators in up to 75% of the church may be removed. Pastors and administrators should determine when and how best to apply this in their local church community.
- Altar servers should be restored for all liturgical celebrations in accordance with local custom.



- Baptismal fonts, Holy Water basins and stoups may now be filled with Holy Water. Those who remain concerned may be reminded that the use of Holy Water (a sacramental) is never a requirement. Electronic Holy water dispensers may continue to be used in certain instances for some who may prefer it for the time being.
- For the celebration of Weddings and Funerals, all the requirements for the public celebration of Mass as outlined here should be followed.
- Deacons should resume the full range of liturgical functions during the Mass as prescribed in the Roman Missal (including preparing the altar, elevating the chalice, etc....). In addition, when a deacon is present and serving at the altar, a separate chalice may still be used for the deacon; this additional chalice is not ever elevated during the *Per ipsum*. If there is no second chalice of Precious Blood, the deacons may still receive under the form of the Body of Christ. Concelebrants always have the option of receiving the Precious Blood by intinction.
- The traditional physical exchange of the sign of peace continues to be omitted.
- The Precious Blood may not yet be extended to the Faithful.
- Holy Communion may be given on the tongue or in the hand, *always and only* at the discretion of the communicant. As in previous times, it is not necessary to purify hands between each reception of Holy Communion and should not be done.
- Congregational singing should resume in a normative way.

Additionally, a pastor [or administrator] is to determine:

- Whether or not to provide hand sanitizing opportunities for the faithful at entrances and to liturgical ministers.
- Whether to continue to live stream masses based on the needs of the parishioners. Livestreaming may be an important part of outreach to shut-ins, incarcerated and visitors. It doesn't normally replace the obligation of the Sunday precept. Please be reminded that it is the serious responsibility of each parish to ensure compliance with all copyright laws.
- Whether choirs and other musical ensembles should return to their pre-pandemic procedures.
- Whether the passing of collection baskets is to take place, or another mode adopted.
- Whether the procession of the gifts should take place or not.
- Whether there may be a movement back into confessional boxes/confined rooms for the celebration of the Sacrament of Penance/Reconciliation.