

# Guidelines: Worship Together Safely

## Archdiocese of Cincinnati

*Revised 3/12/21*

*Until further notice:*

- We recognize that the coronavirus pandemic, despite positive trends and widespread vaccinations, is far from over. **For that reason, the dispensation from the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and other holy days of obligation will remain in place for the foreseeable future to not unduly burden the consciences of those who have serious health concerns, either for themselves or for someone in their immediate care.** The health and safety of our communities continues to be of paramount importance. However, for those who are able to safely return, we wholeheartedly look forward to worshipping with you in person once more.
- **In all circumstances, the regulations put forth by public health authorities must be observed (e.g. masks, social distancing, cleaning, etc.)**
  - Consistent with Gov. DeWine's July 2020 order on the wearing of masks in public places, it is expected that masks are worn at all times in church. Priests, deacons, readers, and cantors may (if socially distant from others) remove their mask while speaking or singing, but masks must be worn while in procession throughout the church and especially during the distribution of Holy Communion.
  - [The CDC guidelines for cleaning public facilities](#) should be observed as closely as possible, but the extraordinary measures employed last year may no longer be necessary.

*(over)*

## **Specific Guidelines to be Observed:**

- Water in baptismal and holy water fonts should be refreshed regularly.
  - Since they should be empty as of Holy Thursday, a possible time to refill them would be prior to the Easter Vigil.
- Hymnals and missalettes may again be placed in pews.
  - Consider continuing to post a digital worship aid online even if you don't print one.
- The ministry of choirs, ensembles, and wind instruments may gradually be restored, but may need to continue in a reduced capacity for the foreseeable future.
  - See detailed guidance and strategies below.
- The gifts of bread and wine should be kept from public areas, brought directly from the credence table to the altar.
- No collection baskets may be passed from hand to hand; consider a monitored collection point (i.e. an usher monitoring a single basket near the main doors of the church) to minimize contact.
- The bread to be consecrated for the Communion of the faithful may be placed on a corporal at the edge of the altar, not directly in front of the priest celebrant. Alternatively, the use of covered ciboria would likewise be appropriate.
- There should be no physical contact between members of other households during the Our Father or the Sign of Peace.
- Discreet use of hand sanitizer by ministers of Holy Communion should continue.
- No Holy Communion from the chalice by the faithful; concelebrating priests should Communicate by intinction. Holy Communion in the hand is strongly encouraged.
- Vessels should be cleansed after each Mass with hot, soapy water.
- Other than as Viaticum to the critically ill, Holy Communion should, whenever possible, be given in the context of Mass. If however this is not possible, Holy Communion may be given outside of Mass, according to the approved rites.
- If necessary to ensure social distancing and conform to public health regulations, Mass (including a nuptial or funeral Mass) may be

celebrated outside of the parish church, but preferably on parish grounds. Specific permission must be sought in advance from the Vicar General ([sangi@catholicaoc.org](mailto:sangi@catholicaoc.org))

## **Ongoing strategies to consider:**

### **HEALTH SAFETY**

- Ensure proper ventilation in public spaces.
- Make hand sanitizer available at each entrance.
- Reduce the number of touchpoints as people enter by propping open doors or having one person open doors.
- Clean restrooms frequently, even between Sunday liturgies.
- Ensure safe and healthy holy water
  - Refresh the water regularly
  - For taking home, have holy water available that has NOT been touched by others in the fonts
  - For baptism, water should be used that has NOT been touched by the faithful in self-blessing

### **LITURGICAL MINISTRY**

- Reduce the number of possible entrances into the church to better regulate attendance and preserve one-way traffic patterns.
- Count the number of attendees at Mass to anticipate future crowds.
- Utilize auxiliary but connected spaces like choir lofts, transepts, etc. to maximize capacity.
- Invite people to RSVP in advance of coming to Mass using services such as SignupGenius, Eventbrite, etc.
- Consider the routes of the Communion procession to avoid two-way traffic if possible.
- Suspend Children's Liturgy of the Word unless this can be done with appropriate social distancing.
- Avoid ministers greeting the faithful after Mass unless this can be done with proper social distancing.
- Avoid social activities (e.g. coffee and donuts) unless this can be done with proper social distancing and food safety protocols.
- Ensure that the giving of bulletins after Mass can be done safely and with appropriate social distancing; perhaps emphasize online access to bulletins and other important publications.

- If more space is needed for the Sacrament of Reconciliation, use a larger room rather than the usual confessional, and emphasize the use of a screen.

## MUSIC MINISTRY

- Choirs and other singers should sing with masks at all times.
  - The only exception would be the psalmist or cantor, provided he/she is at least 12 feet away from anyone else
- Wind instruments can be used, provided proper bell covers and distances are maintained. (Strings and percussion may obviously continue.)
- Rehearsals should take place in large, well-ventilated areas. Rehearsals should not last more than 45 minutes in any one location.
  - Rehearsals themselves can last longer but should move to a different location.
  - On a practical level, this allows the singer/instrumentalist a “mask break” as singing with a mask is tiring after a period of time, and “fresh air”.
- Congregational singing can occur. The following order of importance should be kept in mind (cf. *Sing to the Lord*, #115):
  - Dialogue between priest and congregation
  - Ordinary (Eucharistic acclamations, Gospel acclamation)
  - Antiphons and psalms
  - Litanies (*Kyrie, Agnus Dei*, Universal Prayer)
  - Propers/Hymns and other songs

## Resources:

[U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\): Guidance for Faith-Based Organizations](#)

[Ohio Dept of Health Checklist for Faith-Based Organizations](#)

With questions or concerns, please [contact the Office for Divine Worship & Sacraments](#).

