



**To: Priests and Deacons, Parishes**  
**Fr: Vicar General**  
**Re: Liturgy and Prayer for the People of God and Parish meetings**  
**Date: March 13, 2020**

Per the decision to suspend public celebrations of most liturgies, below please find specific guidance on how best to proceed with celebrating the sacraments and allowing our sacred spaces to remain open for personal devotion during this time. Please note separate sections for each sacrament, as well as specific and important guidance for administering the sacraments to any person who is a confirmed COVID-19 patient.

### **Keeping Churches Open for Personal Devotion**

Our churches should remain open for private prayer during a timeframe best determined by each pastor given constraints of staffing and the need to perform routine maintenance.

### **Spiritual Communion via Televised/Live-Streamed Masses**

Televised or live-streamed, online Mass viewing is an opportunity for the faithful to remain connected to the Sacrifice of the Mass during this difficult time. Please share with your people [Mass at Mercy Home](#), which is televised across Chicagoland and available online. If your parish is able to do livestreaming of Mass from your church, please offer this to your parishioners.

### **Baptism**

All parishes in the Archdiocese of Chicago are asked to observe some temporary practical norms concerning the Sacrament of Baptism. At this time, Baptisms are still possible based on pastoral urgency. However, in order to limit any potential spread of the virus to a vulnerable population, we recommend only small, private family Baptisms. We recommend against any "immersion" baptisms. Instead, please use fresh water that has been blessed for the Baptism and immediately drain it after. Family members in vulnerable populations as described in earlier guidelines should be encouraged to stay home.

### **Confession**

During Lent, it is important that our people experience God's mercy in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Therefore, every consideration should be given to offering the Sacrament of Reconciliation to individuals. To help minimize the risk of exposure, we recommend considering the following actions should anyone be concerned about possible transmission of the Coronavirus/COVID-19:

- Temporarily move out of the confessional if it is in a tight space and provide the Sacrament of Reconciliation in a larger room where a confidential conversation can still be held.
- If possible, we recommend using a screen to block the air flow between the priest and penitent. The penitent should always have the option of confessing their sins anonymously.
- Ensure at least 6 feet of space between the priest and penitent.
- We advise using a chair without armrests or cleansing the armrests with a sanitizer between each person. You may also consider providing this sacrament in such a way that the penitent remains standing so to ensure proper distance while minimizing the surfaces that are touched.
- If you hear confessions from multiple penitents back-to-back, please ensure disinfecting wipes are available and used between each person's confession.

### **Confirmations**

All confirmation dates scheduled beginning March 13 until Easter are postponed and will be rescheduled. Please communicate this to your parish families. Further information will be made available regarding rescheduling.



### **Weddings and Funerals**

At this time, weddings and funerals are still possible. However, to limit any potential spread of the virus to a vulnerable population, we recommend only small private family weddings and funeral services. Again, per the recommendations from the IDPH and CDPH, gatherings above 250 people are to be cancelled, as well as those that may attract people of vulnerable populations.

### **Ministering the Sacraments to non-COVID-19 patient**

#### **Holy Communion to the Sick and Homebound including Guidelines for Ministers of Care**

- If the visit is in a hospital environment, follow the hospital directives regarding personal care (washing hands, etc.)
- If the visit is in a home, follow the guidelines below
  - Wash hands or use a hand sanitizer once you enter the home
  - Avoid any physical contact with the person or family during the visit
  - Use a hand sanitizer again before distributing Communion
  - If the communicant usually receives Communion on the tongue, strongly encourage him or her, for your safety as well as his / hers, to receive Communion in the hand
  - Wash or sanitize your hands after the visit.
- Maintain social distance (six feet) with everyone in the room, except the patient.
- Do not offer comfort with any physical contact.

#### **Anointing of the Sick**

If the sacrament is celebrated in a health care facility, follow the protocols and protective guidelines of that facility.

- Maintain social distance with everyone in the room so as to offer comfort without making physical contact.
- Wash or sanitize your hands once you enter the room.
- The anointing may be done with a cotton-tipped swab or a cotton ball which is to be burned or buried after use.
- If Holy Communion is given, it is to be distributed in the hand.
- Sanitize your hands after the visit.

### **Ministering the Sacraments to confirmed COVID-19 patient**

#### **Restrictions for who can fulfill this ministry:**

- **No priest in the high-risk group (i.e., over 60)**
- **No priest with comorbidity; i.e., when two or more chronic illnesses are present. For example, Hypertension, diabetes, Crohn's disease, any cancers, rheumatoid arthritis, asthma, COPD, heart disease.**
- **These restrictions are in place following the healthcare guidance that indicate younger, healthier individuals are at a much-diminished risk of contracting a serious case of COVID-19.**

#### **Anointing of the Sick**

- If this is performed in a hospital or healthcare facility, the guidelines for protective measures, including garments, prevail.
- If this is not in a hospital or healthcare facility: If available, latex gloves should be worn unless the patient or priest/deacon has an allergic sensitivity to latex. Additionally, if available, protective eye wear (a pair of glasses will suffice) should be worn.
- The anointing may be done with a cotton-tipped swab or a cotton ball which is to be burned or buried after use.



- If the priest uses his gloved hand, the glove is to be burned or buried after the visit.
- If Holy Communion is given, it is to be distributed in the hand.
- Maintain social distance (six feet) with everyone in the room, except the patient.
- Do not offer comfort with any physical contact.

**Holy Communion to the Sick and Homebound including Guidelines for Ministers of Care**

- If this is performed in a hospital or healthcare facility, the guidelines for protective measures, including garments, prevail.
- If this is not in a hospital or healthcare facility: If available, latex gloves should be worn unless the patient or priest/deacon has an allergic sensitivity to latex. Additionally, if available, protective eye wear (a pair of glasses will suffice) should be worn.
- If the visit is in a home, follow the guidelines below
  - Wash hands or use a hand sanitizer once you enter the home;
  - Avoid any physical contact with the person or family during the visit;
  - Use a hand sanitizer again before distributing Communion;
  - If the communicant usually receives Communion on the tongue, strongly encourage him or her, for your safety as well as his / hers, to receive Communion in the hand
- Maintain social distance (six feet) with everyone in the room, except the patient.
- Do not offer comfort with any physical contact.

**Regarding Religious Education, RCIA and All Other Ministry Groups**

All classes, sessions and meetings are to be cancelled regardless of the number of attendees/participants.