

The State of Illinois entered the “**Bridge Phase**” last Friday which allows for increased capacity limits. Parishes are permitted to plan for increased attendance for liturgies and non-liturgical gatherings.

However, our Sanctuary cannot hold 60% of its seating capacity while observing social distancing. Therefore, we have increased the number of seats for worshipers from **220 to 300** which includes the Sanctuary and the Gathering Space.

Our plan is to prepare you and our worship space for Phase 5 which may happen in June and will allow us to meet and worship without any limits.

Meanwhile, for the remainder of the month of May, **please be patient with:**

- our **Volunteers,**
- being required to **register for Mass,**
- **wearing masks,**
- the Pastor’s Re-Opening Team and its attempts to implement this new phase, which may include:
 - adding more seats in some pews and in the Gathering Space
 - opening currently blocked pews
 - reinstating the procession for Communion
 - re-opening the East Entrance.

Let us keep each other in our prayers as we approach this new phase in our COVID mitigations.

Have a blessed day.

Fr. Chris D. Ciastoń

Bridge Phase – all Archdiocesan updates

Updates published May 12, 2021 - most recent changes highlighted in yellow below.

Capacity Limits for Masses and Liturgies

With the State of Illinois and City of Chicago poised to enter the 'Bridge Phase', which allows for increased capacity limits, parishes are permitted to plan for increased attendance for liturgies and non-liturgical gatherings beginning May 14 (assuming no delays to the Bridge Phase), as follows:

Masses and liturgies: capacity is 60% of the church. Based on measurements taken during the initial reopening efforts, and accounting for the necessity of maintaining physical distancing, this equates to approximately seating in every other pew. This is how to begin managing increased capacity if you have not already done so.

Missalettes, hymnals, bulletins

Missalettes and hymnals may be used by parishioners to follow along with the readings; however, there is still to be no congregational singing during the liturgy.

Bulletins, prayer cards and other items to be distributed may be handed out as people leave the church by ushers who are gloved and masked.

Baptism

- Cotton balls / Q-tips are no longer needed for baptisms or confirmations if the priest or bishop is fully vaccinated and he sanitizes his hands before anointing.
- Godparents may accompany parents to the font for baptism but must maintain physical distance.

Reconciliation

Though individual confessions are now permissible within our reopening plan, some penitents may still be uncomfortable coming to the church for a while. Offered here are points to consider in your pastoral care of those parishioners.

- First, it is important to keep in mind that virtual or phone confessions are never permissible, nor are novelties, such as drive-thru confessions. Despite the good intentions, we must attend to our underlying theological tradition of the sacrament.
- in keeping with longstanding pastoral practice when penitents' access to the sacrament is restricted, they can be assured that their sins are forgiven if they make an act of contrition with a firm resolve to approach the Sacrament of Reconciliation as soon as possible. All the faithful are encouraged to do so in complete dependence upon the mercy and love of God, in sorrow for all sins and with a firm resolve to confess all serious sin at the next available time and keeping in mind the Church's precept of making a good confession at least once per year.
- the faithful should be encouraged to pray particular prayers or meditate on passages of the bible that you recommend to assist them in seeking the mercy and forgiveness of God and the grace of reconciliation.
- the Holy See has made clear with a recent [decree concerning the Sacrament of Reconciliation from the Apostolic Penitentiary](#) that the conditions for General Absolution have not been met. The decree states that the primary place it would be permitted is in a hospital ward. However, our hospitals are not currently set up for this possibility.

We can serve our people well with pastoral tenderness if we recall for them that our Lord knows their hearts and desires to reconcile their lives to Him and He awaits their presence in the Sacrament when it is possible for them to do so.

Eucharist

Distribution of Holy Communion at Mass

- Face shields are no longer necessary if the priest / deacon / minister is fully vaccinated (reminder: a person is considered fully vaccinated two weeks following the day of the last dose of the vaccine, whether 1-dose or 2-dose).

- If it has been the case, communicants no longer need to remain in their pew to receive Holy Communion; all may process up the aisles. However, a **single-file** line for each Communion minister is necessary to maintain physical distancing.

Bringing Holy Communion to the Sick and Homebound

Visits should be brief. One minister visits at one time (i.e., no teams of ministers).

- Ministers must be fully vaccinated (defined as two weeks following second dose of a two-dose vaccine or two weeks following one-dose vaccine).
- Communion Services (in assisted living homes, senior residents, e.g.) are permissible as long as both residents and ministers are fully vaccinated.

Confirmation and Easter Sacraments

- Cotton balls / Q-tips are no longer needed for baptisms or confirmations if the priest or bishop is fully vaccinated and he sanitizes his hands before anointing.
- Godparents may accompany parents to the font for baptism but must maintain physical distance.
- The priest may lay hands per the sacrament of anointing of the sick and other rites if he is fully vaccinated and he sanitizes his hands immediately before and after.

Each Pastor and Parish Administrator is given delegation to confirm his parishioners on a date(s) convenient to the parish through June 30, 2021. The USCCB has received broad permission to provide to Pastors the printed **Rite of Confirmation** in English, Spanish and Polish in this circumstance. Please note that certain adaptations from the norm of the Rite contained in the archdiocesan Guidelines for Adolescent and Adult Confirmations must be incorporated as a matter of safety during the pandemic.

Regarding Sacrament of Initiation

A letter extending the already-granted delegation to all priests currently assigned to pastoral ministry in the Archdiocese of the faculty to confer the Sacrament of Confirmation on catechized adults was distributed by the Vicar General on June 15, 2020.

Marriage / Weddings

Weddings may include the placing of the Lasso or veil. The Best Man and Maid of Honor are to sanitize their hands before placing it on the couple, and then move immediately back to maintain physical distance.

Anointing of the Sick

Under the State's exemption for essential services, the Archdiocese of Chicago is including Anointing of the Sick as an essential service. However, out of an abundance of caution, specific and detailed protocols must be followed concerning confirmed COVID-19 patients and only a select number of priests will be allowed to administer this sacrament to those patients. Below are steps to follow in all instances of requests for Anointing of the Sick.

When a request is made for a priest to administer this sacrament, the priest must inquire if the ill person is a confirmed COVID-19 patient.

If YES (the patient IS a COVID-19 patient), the priest who received the initial request must:

1. notify the family that due to guidelines set forth by the archdiocese to ensure everyone's health, another priest must take the call and that the family will be contacted by that priest. Explain to the family members that out of an abundance of caution only a select number of our priests are allowed to administer this sacrament to any confirmed COVID-19 patients until further notice.
2. Ask for contact information from the family including name of a contact person and best phone number to reach the contact; name of the sick individual; and whether or not the person is hospitalized and, if so, at what hospital. If not hospitalized, note the address where the anointing would take place and in what parish.
3. Immediately refer the case with the information gathered directly to one of the current COVID-19 Coordinators (Fathers, see email from Vicar General on April 30, 2020)
 1. The Coordinator will contact a designated priest in the Vicariate where the individual is located.
 2. The designated priest will gather further information and then may proceed under specific guidelines to minister the sacrament.

If UNSURE (the family does not know if the patient has COVID-19), the priest who received the initial request must, out of an abundance of caution, follow the steps as if the patient is a confirmed COVID-19 patient.

1. Notify the family that due to guidelines set forth by the archdiocese to ensure everyone's health, the case needs to be referred to our COVID-19 Coordinator to ensure an approved priest can administer the sacrament.
2. Ask for contact information from the family including name of a contact person and best phone number to reach the contact; name of the sick individual; and whether or not the person is hospitalized and, if so, at what hospital. If not hospitalized, note the address where the anointing would take place and in what parish.
3. Immediately refer the case with the information gathered directly to one of the current COVID-19 Coordinators. (Fathers, see email from Vicar General on March 30, 2020)

If NO (the patient is NOT a COVID-19 patient), the priest who received the initial request may proceed himself to administer the sacrament under the guidelines noted below for **Ministering the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick to a non-COVID-19 patient**. This case does NOT need to be referred to the Coordinators.

Ministering the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick to a NON-COVID-19 patient

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

If in a home, please observe all current guidelines including:

- Maintain social distance with everyone in the room so as to offer comfort without making physical contact.
- Wash or sanitize your hands with soap and warm water before you enter the room.
- The anointing must 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 with soap and warm water after the visit.
- After administering the sacrament, use bleach wipes or soap and water for the sanitizing of all supplies.

Funerals and Christian Burials

Graveside committal services may exceed more than ten people with all attendees wearing a mask and maintaining 6 ft. of social distance; attendees living in the same domicile gathered together must maintain 6 ft. of social distance from other groups/attendees. In a situation where it is necessary to host the committal service in a parish/cemetery chapel within the Archdiocese of Chicago, the total number of people cannot exceed 15% of the occupancy rate for the chapel.

Per Illinois Department of Public Health guidelines, children under the age of 2 are exempt from face coverings, as are individuals who cannot tolerate face coverings for medical reasons.

Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament / Adoration Chapels

- All established protocols are to be followed (capacity limits, participant registration, sanitizing in between adorers, etc.).
- Capacity for each chapel is to be determined and should be posted on signs for each chapel.
- Physical distancing is to be observed and volunteers are to be available for regular cleaning.
- Monitoring must take place to ensure that someone is always present before the Blessed Sacrament.

Processions

- **Solemnity of Corpus Christi / Eucharistic Processions:** Outdoor processions are allowed. Participants are to maintain physical distance during the procession.
- Opening Processions for Liturgies
 - Limited to the priest, deacon, lector and servers.
 - Physical distance of 6 ft. must be maintained between ministers.
- Gift Procession during Mass

- A simple procession of members from one household may bring up the gifts.
- Hands of those bearing gifts are to be sanitized before taking up the gifts.
- Masks must be worn.
- Priest and deacon must also wear masks.
- The ciborium with the hosts is to be covered.
- Collections
 - Ushers may use the baskets on poles ONLY.
 - Baskets may not be passed from person to person.
- Weddings
 - Wedding party participants can be in the opening procession as long as physical distance of 6 ft. is maintained throughout.
 - Masks must be worn by all in the procession.
- There is to be no procession of students in Confirmation or First Communion Liturgies.

Use of Water During Liturgies

- Sprinkling
 - Only fresh water blessed in the sprinkling vessel is to be used.
 - The blessed water is not to be reused and is to be properly disposed of after Mass.
 - The vessel is to be cleaned in between Masses.

Altar Servers at Mass and other Liturgies

- Servers are to:
 - be at least 10 years of age.
 - remain masked at all times.
 - remain physically distanced while seated.

- sanitize their hands before taking any item to the priest/deacon/altar (Missal, lavabo bowl, cruets, etc.)

Music Ministry

- Congregational singing is still not permitted.
- **Instrumentalists**, including wind instruments, may return to ministry if they are fully vaccinated and provide written documentation to the pastor or liturgy director. Instrumentalists must maintain a physical distance of 6ft. from anyone else.
- **Choirs** may return to ministry if all members are fully vaccinated – they, too, must provide written documentation to the pastor or liturgy director. Additionally:
 - The space for the choir must be separated from the rest of the congregation by at least 12 ft.
 - All choir members must maintain a physical distance of 6 ft. from one another.
 - Masks must be worn by all choir members – when singing and not singing. Singers may opt for “singers masks,” which help contain droplets while allowing space around the mouth to sing as comfortably as possible with a mask.
- **Cantors**, since they are physically distant from all others, may still sing without wearing a mask.

Livestreamed Liturgies

All livestreamed parish Masses and all private Masses are to be celebrated according to archdiocesan guidelines.

Pastors are encouraged to continue livestreaming parish liturgies as a way of serving those who cannot attend Masses in person.

Livestreaming is also a good practice to strengthen the sense of community for the entire parish and presents an opportunity to share the Good News of Jesus Christ far and wide while offering an additional way to reach those on the margins or who are seeking an encounter with the Risen Lord.

Plenary Indulgence

The Apostolic Penitentiary also issued a decree granting a Plenary Indulgence during this extraordinary time. In light of this, please consider sharing the following with your people:

- As many people are unfamiliar with indulgences it is helpful to review in a simple way the Church's true teaching on this grace:
 - Fundamentally, indulgences (plenary/full or partial) refer to a repairing and healing of the damage inflicted by sin.
 - In the English language, the word "indulgence" carries the connotation of "permission" or "license to do something." In the Church and with regard to sin, this certainly is not the case.
 - In traditional language, this is the "remission of temporal punishment due to sin." That we, through prayer and action recommended by the Church, can engage in this healing and repair is not because of our own efforts, merit, or power.
 - The Church, drawing on the doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ and the Communion of Saints speaks of drawing grace from the "treasury of the Church."
 - In this moment of isolation and disconnection, the proposal to seek an indulgence re-affirms our connection in the Body of Christ and with the saints.
- The *Plenary indulgence* is granted to the faithful suffering from Coronavirus, who are subject to quarantine by order of the health authority in hospitals or in their own homes if, with a spirit detached from any sin, they:
 - unite spiritually through the media to the celebration of Holy Mass, the recitation of the Holy Rosary, to the pious practice of the Way of the Cross or other forms of devotion,
 - or if at least they will recite the Creed, the Lord's Prayer and a pious invocation to the Blessed Virgin Mary, offering this trial in a spirit of faith in God and charity towards their brothers and sisters,

- with the will to fulfill the usual conditions (sacramental confession, Eucharistic communion and prayer according to the Holy Father's intentions), as soon as possible, when the suspensions are lifted.
- Please use your parish website, email blasts, etc. to let your parishioners know this information.
 - In addition, health care workers, first responders, family members and all those who, following the example of the Good Samaritan, exposing themselves to the risk of contagion, care for the sick of Coronavirus according to the words of the divine Redeemer: 'Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends' (*Jn 15: 13*), will obtain the same gift of the *Plenary Indulgence* under the same conditions.

Especially in this challenging moment, seeking an indulgence is a way of doing something spiritually and a way of praying for ourselves and for others.