



COVID Protocol effective May 28, 2021

Introduction

Given the reinstatement by the Bishops of NJ of the obligation to attend Sunday Mass and the lessening of restrictions from the state, the following is provided as an update to our COVID protocols.

Below is a summary of the new protocols. Effective May 28, masks will no longer be required for fully vaccinated persons. If not fully vaccinated, persons are strongly encouraged to follow CDC guidance and wear a face mask in public settings. People will no longer be required to socially distance indoors or outdoors, (May 28), although unvaccinated persons should continue to maintain a safe distance from others (some pews will be left closed for this purpose).

Mass Attendance

Cardinal Tobin and the Bishops of New Jersey are reinstating the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation effective June 5/6, the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ. To read the official statement and guidelines please visit:

<https://www.rcan.org/>

Updated Directives

- Churches and parish facilities may return to 100 per cent capacity with no social distancing for both indoor and outdoor services and activities, as of June 4, 2021.
- If you are vaccinated, you are no longer required to wear a mask. Proof of vaccination is not required.
- Anyone not fully vaccinated should wear a mask. Any vaccinated person preferring to wear a mask should feel free to do so.
- Churches and meeting spaces should continue to be sanitized after each liturgy, event or meeting.

Opening Rites

- Opening (and closing) processions may take place at any liturgy.

Preparation of the Gifts

- We ask that you continue to place your weekly offerings in the collection box by the doors of the church.
- We will continue to refrain from an offertory procession at this time.

The Communion Rite

- The Sign of Peace will continue to be made without physical contact.
- Communicants will continue to receive Communion in the hand. If not fully vaccinated, they lower their masks to consume the host, then replace their masks. The chalice is still prohibited for the assembly.

Hymnals and Bulletins

- Hymnals and reusable booklets are permitted for use.
- Parishes may continue to use electronic media, e.g., projector and screen, for the people's participation.
- Bulletins and other handouts may be left for parishioners to pick up or they may be handed out by ushers/greeters.

Confessionals

Confessionals and reconciliation rooms may be used, but the Sacrament of Penance may still be celebrated outside of the confessional as needed. Consideration should be given to the comfort level of both priest and confessor.

Clergy

As stated above, priests do not have to wear masks except:

- They must wear masks when distributing Communion
- They must wear masks when administering the sacraments in close proximity to the recipients (Baptism, Confirmation, First Communion, Matrimony and Anointing of the Sick)
- During the Eucharistic Prayer, if a priest is not wearing a mask, there must be a cover over the hosts being consecrated at the altar.
- They have the option to wear masks at all other times in the liturgy.

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

- All Extraordinary Ministers of Communion (and clergy) must sanitize their hands AFTER they themselves consume Communion and BEFORE they distribute to the assembly.
- Fully vaccinated ministers are only required to wear a mask when distributing Communion.

Livestreaming Mass

Livestreaming may continue for those who are ill; those who have reason to believe that they were recently exposed to the coronavirus or another serious or contagious illness; those who are confined to their home, a hospital, or nursing facility and those with serious underlying health conditions.

It still needs to be noted that even with precautions in place, it is still possible to contract Covid-19 in church. All liturgical ministers should be aware that as parishioners return to Mass, some are experiencing fear and anxiety. There are also parishioners who have underlying health conditions which add to their apprehension. It is important that all ministers comply with these directives in order to ensure the safety of all those attending parish liturgies.

For more safety information:

<https://nj.gov/governor/news/news/562021/approved/20210503b.shtml>