



ARCHDIOCESE OF NEWARK

Updated Liturgical Directives During the Covid-19 Pandemic May 5, 2021

As we enter the second year of the pandemic, it is imperative to continue practicing safe measures to prevent the spread of Covid-19. The church should continue to be sanitized after each liturgy; social distancing is still required, and parishioners must wear masks at all times on church property. Recently, progress has been made against the virus. More people are being vaccinated and church capacity has increased, but all precautions need to be taken especially with new variants of the virus.

The following directives are mandated for the Archdiocese of Newark:

Effective May 7

- For all events, indoor or outdoor, facial coverings must be worn and social distancing respected and maintained.
- Outdoor gathering limit increases to 500 individuals.
- There is no limit for outdoor gatherings for wedding ceremonies, wedding receptions, funerals, memorial services, religious activities, or political activities.
- Indoor room capacities increase to 50% with a maximum of 250 individuals for private catered events, political gatherings, weddings, funerals, memorial services and performances.
- Dance floors at private catered events (school proms, weddings, etc.) are allowed to open, again citing room capacity restrictions.
- Outdoor capacity for large venues (1000 or more fixed seats) increases to 50%.
- Outdoor carnivals and fairs are permitted to operate at 50% capacity, aligned with other amusement businesses.

Effective May 19th

- For all events, indoor or outdoor, facial coverings must be worn and social distancing respected and maintained.
- Indoor capacity for large venues (1,000 or more fixed seats) can increase to 30% – with six feet of distance between ticketed groups.
- Indoor capacities for the following will be limited to a maximum of 250 people so long as social distancing can be maintained:
 - Catered events
 - Funerals or memorial services

- Performances
- Political activities
- Commercial gatherings

Indoor Religious Ceremonies

Indoor religious ceremonies are limited to 50% up to 250 individuals, whichever is less. Masks must be worn, and social distancing maintained. In some churches this may mean seating is limited to less than 250 people depending on capacity and social distancing compliance. Parishes are advised to continue registration for liturgy for the purpose of contact tracing. Although restrictions are being lessened, the virus remains a health threat, so precautions need to be continued.

Parishioners

Parishes should advise parishioners to register prior to Mass to allow for contact tracing. Outdoor Masses are allowed with gatherings up to 500 people. Regardless of whether Mass is inside or outside, all parishioners must wear masks and practice social distancing when attending Mass. At Communion time, parishioners will continue to receive Communion in the hand, lower their masks to consume the host, then replace their masks before being seated. The chalice is still prohibited for the assembly.

Opening and Closing Processions on Sundays

Depending on the size of the church, at the weekend Masses, there may be a procession at the beginning and end of Mass. All in procession, including clergy, need to wear a mask and social distance.

Lectors and Cantors

The following applies to all lectors and cantors depending on the size of the church and, more importantly, the distance between the altar, ambo and assembly. In places where the assembly is significantly more than six feet from the sanctuary, the following may apply to cantors and lectors at the discretion of the pastor:

- They must wear masks when they are in the church.
- They do not have to wear masks when reading/singing at the ambo/lectern.
- If the lector/cantor chooses not to wear a mask when reading/singing, the mask should be removed upon entering the ambo/lectern and replaced prior to exiting.
- Lectors/cantors may continue to wear masks when reading/singing if they wish to do so.

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.

Clergy

As stated in Archdiocesan policy, priests do not have to wear masks except:

- They must wear masks when processing in or out of church.
- They must wear masks when preaching outside the ambo and giving out Communion.
- When a priest is saying Mass without a mask, there must be a cover over the hosts being consecrated at the altar.
- Priest should wear masks when administering the sacraments (baptizing, confirming, anointing the sick, etc.)
- They have the option to wear masks at all other times in the liturgy.
- Deacons must wear masks during the liturgy, but they may remove their masks to proclaim the Gospel and when preaching from the ambo.

Offertory Collections

- Collections may be resumed. Ushers may use long handled baskets or move through the open pews. Baskets should not be passed from person to person.
- Parishes may still leave baskets at the doors of the church.
- Parishioners should also be encouraged to use electronic giving.

Hymnals and Bulletins

- Hymnals and any other reusable booklets are not currently permitted for use.
- One-time worship aids may be used but should be recycled after each liturgy.
- Parishes are encouraged to use electronic media, e.g., projector and screen, for the people's participation.
- Bulletins and other handouts can be left for parishioners to take. They should not be distributed by ushers, etc.

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>

Thank you

*for all the ways that you are welcoming people,
keeping them safe and at the same time
providing the best spiritual experiences as possible during this time.*

