

MEMORANDUM

DATE **May 26, 2021**
FROM: **Bishop Oscar A. Solis**
WHAT: **Latest Covid-19 Diocesan Guidelines**

Sunday Mass/ Holy Day of Obligation and Liturgical Practices

The recent developments allow us to reconsider our Diocesan Guidelines in confronting the Coronavirus. As we move to some level of normalcy in many aspects of our lives, the time has finally arrived so we can go back to our normal practice of our faith. The Eucharist remains essential and the summit of our Christian lives and worship where we experience the living and saving presence of Christ and gather as one faith family.

While we realize that the pandemic is by no means over, it is important to reignite our faith in God, to celebrate again the Holy Mass, other Sacraments, and liturgical services in a reasonable and safe manner. Hence, here are the following updates:

- The Dispensation from Sunday Mass and Holydays of Obligation is lifted effective on the weekend on June 5-6, 2021 the Feast of the Body and Blood of Christ. The normal practice of our faith to "keep Holy the Lord's Day" by coming to Mass each Sunday will once again be in effect, which includes the obligation to participate, in-person, in the celebration of Holy Mass each weekend for all who are able to do so.
- The dispensation still applies to those who are sick, elderly, homebound, experiencing great difficulties or other serious risks/concerns in coming to the Church. The dispensation does not relieve the faithful from their sacred duty to keep holy the Sabbath, so all are encouraged to spend time in prayer, thanksgiving, and rest on the Lord's Day.
- Those who are sick, vulnerable or who care for others with underlying chronic health conditions, as well as those not feeling well, are encouraged to refrain from going to Church and remain at home. They are encouraged to watch and participate in livestreamed or televised Mass. You may call your Pastor and request to receive Holy Communion at home.
- In-person gatherings of the faithful in Church may resume with no size limits if the parish mitigates risk of exposure with physical distancing, the use of mask or facial covering and hand sanitizing/washing.
- Individual pastors may choose to dispense from or make optional the use of facial coverings in the Church given the circumstances of their local communities and the number of the faithful in attendance. We will make face coverings optional at St. Olaf respecting each other and showing concern for the well being of all.
- Reasonable physical distancing for seating in the Church during Mass and other gatherings is recommended between unrelated groups or those not in the same household.
- Continue to offer live-streamed Masses for those who are unable to attend in person. Pastors may provide Holy Communion for those who wish to receive according to your parish situation. The 11:30 Mass will be live-streamed until further notice.
- All parishes will observe the updated guidelines and follow all health and safety recommendations as outlined by local health authorities.

UPDATED Liturgical Practices

The following suspended liturgical practices over the last months may now be reinstated:

1. Entrance procession of Main Celebrant and ministers - servers and lector
 2. Offering of gifts and the passing of the collection basket by ushers with long handle
 3. Sign of peace through a gesture of a nod, bow, or simple hand wave
 4. Distribution of Holy Communion:
 - a. Holy Communion will continue to be offered in the hand as the preferred practice.
 - b. Pastors may use their prudent discretion to distribute Holy Communion on the tongue at the communicant's discretion. Care should be taken by the ministers of Holy Communion to sanitize their hands in case they touched the communicant's tongue or saliva. Those wishing to receive on the tongue please come forward after those receiving in the hand.
 - c. A designated station may be identified for those who wish to receive on the tongue after distributing Holy Communion in the hand. Sanitizing after each communion on the tongue is recommended at the discretion of the pastor.
 - d. Distribution of the Precious Blood remains suspended during the pandemic time.
 5. Holy Water may be restored to smaller fonts at the doors but should be changed daily. Sanitize frequently the area around the fonts touched by the faithful.
 6. Parish Bulletin, Missalettes, hymnals and other materials in the pews may be made available using prudential judgement based on scientific finding that transmission of infection is through contact with droplets from the nose and mouth, not so much from touching any surface.
 7. Parishes should provide sanitizing stations in public areas and make masks available to assist in good hygiene and safety. We will offer those who wish to have their own Missalette opportunity to purchase one.
- Other Sacraments, such as Reconciliation/Confession and Baptism, ought to continue as usual, using prudential judgment regarding safety precautions.
 - Every attempt should be made to visit and anoint the sick at home or in the hospital in a manner that is safe for the visitor, the sick person, and other members of the household/staff. It is important to respond promptly to emergency calls, visiting the sick and dying as a corporal act or work of mercy.
 - Communion visits to the homebound by lay ministers or clergy may resume using prudential judgment and proper mitigation.
 - These Guidelines will be modified upon the pastoral discretion of individual pastor as needed, and as circumstances change in the future.