



Guidance for Public Liturgies on Sunday/Weekday Mass

*Revised Directives and Guidance for the
Diocese of Youngstown ~ May 2021*

THE OBLIGATION TO ATTEND SUNDAY MASS

In light of improving circumstances, a reduction in infections, and more people being vaccinated, the Bishops of Ohio have decided that the general obligation to attend Mass on Sunday and Holy Days is to be reinstated on June 5-6, 2021. The following revised Directives and Guidance for Public Liturgies on Sunday and Weekday Mass is issued for all parishes in the Diocese of Youngstown following the latest revised directives from the CDC and State of Ohio.

➤ **General Considerations**

- ❖ Those who are ill, have significant health risk factors or care for someone who is compromised or ill, are exempt from attending Mass on Sunday and Holy Days as well as those who have *significant* fear or anxiety of contracting the coronavirus in a large group of people.
- ❖ These should observe the Lord's Day and are encouraged to spend time in prayer on Sunday, meditating on the Lord's passion, death and resurrection. An appropriate way to do this is through viewing a broadcast of Sunday Mass.

*NOTE: Mass that is broadcast through various media, including live-stream, **is not** intended as an alternative nor does it fulfill the obligation for persons who are able to gather for a Sunday celebration and other Holy Days. **They are intended for the sick, homebound, imprisoned etc. who are unable to attend Mass in person.***

➤ **Specific Considerations**

Every effort should be made to return Sunday/weekday worship to a style that promotes the full, active, and conscious participation of all in attendance as called for by the liturgy and expected by the People of God while maintaining a reasonably safe and comfortable environment. To that end, the following specific considerations can be implemented:

- ❖ **Facial Coverings:** Those who are fully vaccinated are no longer required to wear facial coverings and social distance while at worship.

- ❖ **Seating:** All seating restrictions are removed. Although not required, a section of seating, for the time being, might be retained for social distancing based on the desire of those attending and pastoral judgment.
- ❖ **Music/Singing:** Hymnals, choirs and other instruments can return and singing at Mass can resume.
- ❖ **Collection/Procession of Gifts:** The use of traditional long-handed baskets or the passing of individual baskets through the assembly can resume. The procession of gifts –bread, wine and offertory collection– can resume, however consideration might be given to continue covering the hosts. If this option is used the coverings for the plate/ciboria should be of quality and dignity. Cellophane or paper napkins should be avoided.
- ❖ **Distribution of Holy Communion:** Other than as Viaticum to the critically ill, Holy Communion is to be given in the context of Mass or outside of Mass according to an approved rite (*i.e. Liturgy of the Word with Holy Communion*). The distribution of Holy Communion at any other time (*i.e. immediately after Mass, before Mass etc.*) rather than during Mass is prohibited. Ministers of Holy Communion should continue to *discreetly* sanitize hands before distributing.
- ❖ **Distribution of Holy Communion on the tongue:** Ministers of Holy Communion should respect the way the communicant desires to receive the host. For the time being, it is suggested, that those wishing to receive on the tongue continue to receive from the priest.

➤ **Continuing Restrictions**

In an effort to maintain a reasonable sense of comfort and to alleviate any undue stress or anxiety among those in attendance, the following remain in effect with the hope of their gradual reintroduction to the liturgy in the coming weeks as people become more comfortable.

- ❖ **Sign of Peace:** The Sign of Peace is not suspended just the gesture of shaking hands. The spoken invitation to offer a sign of peace continues and those present are encouraged to bow to others and offer words of peace. Those from the same household can offer a more expressive gesture.
- ❖ **Reception of the Precious Blood:** At the present time, the current environment suggests that reintroducing the reception of the Precious Blood from the chalice by the assembly is not prudent. It is hoped, over time and with improving circumstances, an appropriate and proper reintroduction of the reception of the Precious Blood by the faithful will be possible.

Pastors are encouraged to reassess the circumstances of their parish community in the coming weeks. Further guidance will be provided by the Office of Worship as merited.