



DIOCESE OF TRENTON

701 LAWRENCEVILLE ROAD • TRENTON, NEW JERSEY 08648

DOTCOMM@DIOCESEOFTRENTON.ORG

SENT ON BEHALF OF MSGR. THOMAS N. GERVASIO, VICAR GENERAL

On May 26, the Diocese of Trenton announced a set of protocol changes as the faithful are encouraged to return to in-church Masses. The revisions follow:

REVISIONS OF CURRENT COVID PROTOCOLS

INTRODUCTION

The Bishops of New Jersey have ended the dispensation from the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation effective June 5-6, 2021, the Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ. The faithful are to return to the practice of participating at weekly celebration of Mass in-church. As is always the case, the obligation does not apply to the sick, those with underlying health conditions, and those who remain fearful of COVID-19 transmission.

Effective May 28, 2021, N.J. Gov. Phil Murphy lifted the mandates requiring the wearing of masks and social distancing. Yet, recognizing that the COVID-19 pandemic remains active, wearing a mask is an option for those who wish to do so. The clergy and faithful should use their best judgment to protect their own health and the health of their neighbors. Moreover, those who are not fully vaccinated are strongly encouraged to wear a mask. Limits on church capacity to pre-pandemic levels will be lifted on June 4, 2021.

In light of these developments, the protocols regulating the celebration of Mass and Sacraments in effect since June 2020 are greatly modified, if not ended. The following guidance is provided to facilitate an orderly and careful return to parish life. No one is to be refused the Sacraments due to vaccination status.

GENERAL INFORMATION

- Pastors should devise a liturgical schedule appropriate for parish's needs at this time.
- All doors may be utilized for entrance and exit of church.
- Barriers, tape, cords to maintain social distancing may be removed.
- Sanitizing of pews and other furnishing after each Mass may be discontinued.
- Hand sanitizers should continue to be made available.
- Restrooms may be restored to full use.
- Blessed Water may be placed in fonts.
- Missals and hymnals may be placed in pew book racks.
- Bulletins, worship aids, etc., may be distributed.
- The continued use of livestreaming is encouraged for the benefit of the homebound.

CELEBRATION OF MASS

- "Parking lot Masses" and "In car reception of the Eucharist" should be discontinued.
- Pastors are encouraged to invite liturgical ministers to resume their ministry.
- All ministers of Holy Communion should wear masks while distributing the Holy Eucharist.
- Receiving Holy Communion in the hand continues to be strongly encouraged although Holy Communion may be received on the tongue as well.
- The procession for Holy Communion is strongly encouraged at the usual time at Mass.
- The usual procession of ministers to and from sanctuary may resume.
- Music Ministers may return to their usual ministry.
- The collection may be taken up as in the past.
- The Presentation of the Gifts by the faithful may resume.
- The use of separate chalices for concelebrants and deacons is encouraged for the time being.
- Sharing chalices for the faithful is not permitted at this time. Holy Communion is to be distributed by the sacred host only.
- The Sign of Peace may resume.
- Greeting people at the church door may resume.
- Washing the sacred vessels with warm water and soap after each Mass should continue.

RECONCILIATION

- Confessionals may be used where there is proper ventilation and space. Where there is no proper ventilation and space, pastors should arrange an appropriate place for Confessions.
- Sanitizer and masks should be available and used by the priest and the penitent.

BAPTISM

- More than one infant may be baptized at the same ceremony.
- The blessing and the pouring of water from a pitcher is recommended.
- Q-Tips may continue to be used for the anointings.
- The baptismal garment may be placed upon the newly baptized.
- Group photos may be taken.

WEDDINGS

- Nuptial Masses may be offered.
- Worship aids may be utilized.
- Greetings at the door and the Sign of Peace may be exchanged.
- Group photos may be taken.

FUNERALS

- Vigil services at funeral homes may now resume where previously suspended.
- "Open casket" visitation in church before the Mass is permitted.
- The use of the pall may resume.

PARISH MEETINGS/SOCIALS

- Parish meetings and socials may resume. Refreshments may be served observing local health protocols.

IMPLEMENTATION

- Masks and social distancing requirements are lifted except as noted above on Friday, May 28, and these revisions to pandemic protocols as well as full occupancy of churches are to be implemented on Friday, June 4. The dispensation from Sunday and Holy Day Mass obligation is lifted except as noted above on Saturday, June 5.

Approved by Most Reverend David M. O'Connell, C.M.
Bishop of Trenton
May 26, 2021
Feast of St. Philip Neri