I. GUIDELINES FOR ALL LITURGICAL CELEBRATIONS

Masks – Per the VDH, fully vaccinated individuals do not need to wear masks; however, masks should be worn in indoor public settings, such as a public Mass, in areas of substantial and high transmission. Unvaccinated or not fully vaccinated individuals, to include ages 5 and older, should wear masks in public indoor settings. Any person not wearing a mask shall not be required to produce documentation that they are vaccinated or that they have an underlying medical condition.

- Priests. All priests should follow the mask guidance for those fully vaccinated and those unvaccinated. All priests wearing a mask during any public Mass and other public gatherings should wear the mask during any time when he is not speaking. This would include, and is not limited to, processing and recessing, during the Liturgy of the Word when others are proclaiming readings, during musical selections, and for distribution of Holy Communion.

- Deacons. All deacons should follow the mask guidance for those fully vaccinated and those unvaccinated. All deacons wearing a mask during any public Mass and other gatherings should wear the mask during any time when he is not speaking. This would include, and is not limited to, processing and recessing, during the Liturgy of the Word when others are proclaiming readings, during musical selections, and for distribution of Holy Communion.

- Lectors. Lectors should follow the mask guidance for those fully vaccinated and those unvaccinated. If a lector is wearing a mask, during the proclamation of the reading(s), the lector may remove his/her mask to proclaim the reading but should return the mask after they conclude the reading.

- Cantor. Cantors should follow the mask guidance for those fully vaccinated and those unvaccinated. If the cantor is wearing a mask, the cantor may remove his/her mask when he/she is singing but return the mask after he/she concludes singing.

- Ushers. Ushers should follow the mask guidance for those fully vaccinated and those unvaccinated.
• **Altar Servers.** Altar servers should follow the mask guidance for those fully vaccinated and those unvaccinated. The recommendation to suspend the ministry of altar servers was removed effective April 1, 2021; parishes may resume this ministry at the discretion of the pastor.

• **Lay faithful, including religious sisters and seminarians.** The lay faithful, including religious sisters and seminarians, who are 5- years of age or older as well as those receiving Holy Communion should wear a mask during public Mass.

**Hand sanitizer.**
Parishes are encouraged to continue the practice of offering hand sanitizer. All present are encouraged to use hand sanitizer, when it is available.

**Inviting parishioners to attend liturgical celebrations.**
Parishes should no longer need a plan to invite parishioners to attend liturgical celebrations, *e.g.*, online registration system, etc.

**Flyer for church doors.**
Parishes should include flyers on church doors indicating current mask recommendations. Current entrance flyers for church doors can be found on the Employee Extranet.

**Usher’s functions at liturgical celebrations.**
The Usher’s functions at liturgical celebrations may return to pre-COVID-19 customs and practices at the parish. For example, the usher *no longer* needs to ask households questions before entering the space where liturgical celebrations are celebrated; take temperatures; seat people socially distanced; monitor the capacity limit, as there is no longer a limit; direct people to exit the space when liturgical celebrations conclude, etc.
Music Ministry.

- **Choirs resumed** as of May 28, 2021.
- **Instrumentals.** Parishes may resume the use of any additional instrumentals, which includes strings, percussion, brass, and/or wind instruments. **However, if wind or brass instruments are incorporated into the music ministry at a liturgical celebration, these instrumentalists should maintain social distancing of 10 feet.**
- **Hymnals and/or paper worship aids.** Parishes may resume the use of hymnals and/or resume/continue the use of paper worship aids.

Nursery and cry rooms.
Parishes may use a cry room and nursery with attention to proper cleaning.

Outdoor or parking lot liturgical celebrations.
Liturgical celebrations should occur in the church and not outside or in a parking lot, including, *e.g.*, Mass, Adoration, Benediction, Sacrament of Reconciliation, Distribution of Communion outside of Mass or after Mass celebrated inside the church and/or other secondary space, etc.

II. GUIDELINES FOR THE CELEBRATION OF MASS

Dispensation from the obligation to attend Mass.

The dispensation from the obligation to attend Sunday and Holy Day Mass obligation for all the faithful in the Catholic Diocese of Richmond ceased effective June 26, 2021. At that time, the dispensation was lifted and the obligation to attend Mass was in effect. The decision to remove the dispensation was made by the archbishops of Baltimore and Washington, and by the bishops of Arlington, Richmond, Wheeling-Charleston and Wilmington for their (arch)dioceses.

This obligation does not apply to those who have reason to believe that they were recently exposed to the coronavirus, another serious or contagious illness; those who are confined to their home, a hospital, or nursing facility; or those with serious underlying health conditions.

Designated “Mask Required” Mass

Depending on the circumstances of a parish community, there may be some individuals uncomfortable returning to Mass at which fully vaccinated individuals not wearing a mask are present. A pastor—in consultation with his staff and councils—is invited to consider setting aside a Mass at which all in attendance—vaccinated or unvaccinated—are required to wear a mask.
Further, if deemed necessary to designate a Mass as “Masks required for all in attendance,” this Mass may also occur during the week and use the Sunday readings/Mass settings.

**Time between each Mass | Cleaning and Sanitizing the liturgical space(s).**
The sliding scale regarding the minimum time between Masses was lifted effective April 1, 2021. While cleaning and sanitizing between each Mass is no longer required, parishes are encouraged to continue cleaning the church building and pews with regularity, similar to the practice(s) before COVID-19.

**Children's Liturgy of the Word.**
Parishes may resume the Children’s Liturgy of the Word.

**More than one priest present for Mass.**
Priests should receive under both species with a separate paten and chalice for each priest. If there is a single chalice, all of the priests should receive communion by intinction.

**Distribution of Holy Communion.**
1. Priest, deacons, seminarians, and lay ministers may distribute communion during the Mass.
2. A priest, deacon, seminarian, and lay minister should wear a mask for the distribution of communion. However, all who distribute communion must follow the mask guidance above for those fully vaccinated and those unvaccinated. Those distributing communion should sanitize their hands before distributing communion.
3. Parishes should remove any table(s) used by a minister to stand behind for the distribution of communion.
4. Plexiglass sneeze guards should be removed.
Distribution of the cup.
The distribution of the cup remains suppressed for deacons and the lay faithful until further notice. If a deacon desires to receive under both species, he should consult with the pastor concerning the option of the priest communicating to the deacon using intinction.

Additional specifics during the celebration of Mass.
Offertory. Parishes may resume the passing of the baskets for the collection, or may continue to suppress the passing of baskets for the collection. If suppressed, parishes may continue to place the basket(s) at the front of the church for the faithful to place their offertory in immediately before stepping forward to receive communion or place a basket at the exit of the church for people to utilize as they exit the church after Mass, with an Usher nearby to monitor the basket.

Procession of the offertory and gifts of bread and wine. Parishes may resume the procession of the offertory and gifts of bread and wine. However, parishes may also continue to place on the altar the items necessary for the Liturgy of the Eucharist before Mass begins, as has become the recent practice or placed on the credence table in the sanctuary and brought forward to the altar at the appropriate time.

Lord's Prayer and Sign of Peace. Parishes are to continue the practice of refraining from holding hands during the Lord's Prayer and shaking hands during the Sign of Peace (bow or verbal gesture is appropriate).

Bulletins. Parish may resume the use of printed bulletins. It is recommended that Ushers distribute these items and sanitize their hands before distributing bulletins.

III. CARING FOR THE FAITHFUL UNABLE TO ATTEND MASS

Livestreaming/recorded Masses.
Parishes are encouraged to continue livestreaming/recording Mass for the faithful unable to attend, e.g., those who have not yet received a vaccine; those uncomfortable returning to Mass with unmasked attendees; etc.

Any event (public Mass, worship event, etc.) that is being livestreamed and includes individuals of the general public must give advanced notice that the livestream will be occurring. This includes Masses that are livestreamed within the same diocesan facility. The following language (or an
appropriate adaptation) must be provide so as to give advance notice to your community via channels such as on-site signage and announcements, website and/or other digital media accounts.

Due to COVID-19, Mass is being live streamed for use on various Diocesan digital media accounts of the Catholic Diocese of Richmond, including, but not limited to, the websites of the Catholic Diocese of Richmond and The Catholic Virginian, and social media platforms of the Catholic Diocese of Richmond. Photography and/or screenshot images from the livestream may be used for The Catholic Virginian print edition. If you do not wish to be captured by live streaming, please refrain from attending that particular Mass time.

**Posted homilies and recordings.** Priests are encouraged to continue posting written or videotaped homilies and reflections from the readings of the Mass of the Day on the parish website.

**Prayers for communion by desire.** Parishes may wish to continue to provide prayers for communion by desire, as some members of the faithful, e.g., those who have not yet received a vaccine; those uncomfortable returning to Mass with unmasked attendees; etc, may not feel comfortable attending Mass at this time.

**IV. GUIDELINES FOR USE OF CHURCH BUILDINGS**

**Gatherings.**
Effective May 28, 2021, there are no gathering limits before or after Mass.

**Blessed Sacrament in the church.**
Parishes are encouraged to retain the practice of the tabernacle in the main body of the church. However, after consultation with the parish staff and councils, the tabernacle and/or Blessed Sacrament may return to reservation chapels (if the parish's custom pre-COVID-19 was the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament in a reservation chapel).

**Restroom usage.**
Parishes are no longer required to limit restroom usage.
Baptismal fonts and holy water.
Parish baptismal and holy water fonts—those with running water (living water) or still (non-moving water)—may be filled and used at this time at the discretion of the pastor. Parishes should clean and disinfect the font(s) following their practice(s) in place pre-COVID-19.

V. GUIDELINES FOR OTHER LITURGICAL AND SACRAMENTAL CELEBRATIONS

Distribution of Holy Communion.
Holy Communion may not be distributed outside of a public Mass except when in the context of:
1. Administering the Anointing of the Sick
2. Viaticum accompanying the Last Rites
3. Visiting the sick or homebound, as outlined in section VI.

Baptisms.
An instrument is no longer required for the anointing(s) during the Sacrament of Baptism. However, similar to Anointing of the Sick, when anointing the individual, a new, unused instrument may be used for each individual baptized. Any used instruments should be discarded by burning them; parishes are, therefore, discouraged from using cotton swabs with plastic sticks.

Weddings.
Most weddings are by private invitation and are therefore not considered a public indoor setting. In this case, the standard COVID-19 entrance sign used by parish offices should be posted. These signs do not have the language relating to areas of substantial or high transmission.

First Holy Communion.
If pictures are taken with groups of non-related first communion candidates, masks should be worn. However, individual pictures may be taken with the pastor and the first communion candidate without masks at the pastor’s discretion.

Sacrament of Reconciliation.
Individual reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation is available; parishes may return to their pre-COVID-19 customs and practices for the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
Holy Hours of Adoration with Exposition.
Parishes may resume the celebration of Holy Hours of Adoration with Exposition for the lay faithful following the parish’s pre-COVID-19 customs and practices.

Eucharistic Processions on the Solemnity of Corpus Christi.
Some parishes in the Diocese conclude a Mass on the Solemnity of Corpus Christi with a Eucharistic Procession; parishes are permitted to do so. Parishes concluding Mass on the Solemnity of Corpus Christi with a Eucharistic Procession are reminded to consult the Ceremonial of Bishops (CB), §387-394, and Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass (HCWE), §101-108.

Parishes are reminded to take note of HCWE, §101, 102, 104 and CB, §392 & 393, which speak of the processions occurring outside of the church space.

VI. PASTORAL CARE TO THE SICK
For priests to be available to those in need, they must be accessible by a reliable phone number that they are answering and checking for messages regularly each day. Pastors and Administrators should check their parish’s after-hours voicemail to ensure that their emergency number is current and easily available to those in need. Special care should be made, as is the expectation at all times, to make sure that priests are attentive and responsive to all calls for pastoral care.

Out of a continued abundance of caution, it is advisable that priests, deacons, seminarians, or lay extraordinary ministers of holy communion contact the sick/homebound individual to ensure their comfort with receiving a visit and/or communion and/or anointing by the priest. Pastors are encouraged to ask pastoral care ministers and volunteers to call and correspond with this population frequently. The homebound should be encouraged to view livestream Masses, if available; make a Spiritual Communion; and be kept in prayer at parish Masses.

Parishioners who are facing surgery or who have been recently hospitalized should be anointed and receive Communion if they are properly disposed.

When visiting the sick, priests, deacons, seminarians, and lay ministers should ensure that they are in good health and observe safe hygiene for the safety of themselves and the person(s) they are visiting. If a priest is not healthy or shows initial signs of illness, he is obliged to ask for the
assistance of a neighboring priest to assist with answering the call, particularly if the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick is necessary.

In the event a priest is asked to anoint someone with COVID-19, the Code of Canon Law permits the use of an instrument (Cann. 1000, §2), for example, a cotton swab. In such case, the used instrument should not come in contact again with the oil stock and should be disposed of in a reverent manner like one would with any swab placed in an oil stock. In case of necessity, a single anointing on the forehead or on any other appropriate part of the body with the entire sacramental form (“Through this holy anointing... May the Lord who frees you from sin...”) suffices (Cann. 1000, §1; PCS, 23). Vaccinated priests do not need to quarantine after visiting someone with COVID-19.

If a faithful who is infirm, elderly homebound, or nursing homebound requests communion, deacons, seminarians, and lay ministers may visit the sick/homebound and are permitted to distribute communion to the sick/homebound using their discretion and prudential judgement.

Those bringing communion to or visiting the sick/homebound are encouraged to exercise caution, for example, even if vaccinated, consider wearing a mask while visiting the sick/homebound or bringing communion.