



**OFFICE OF THE VICAR GENERAL
DIOCESE OF BROOKLYN**

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**UPDATES FOR PASTORS AND ADMINISTRATORS
DECEMBER 4, 2020**

Bishop DiMarzio has asked that the following be communicated to all Pastors and Administrators.

Because of the increase in the number of infections and because we wish to maintain the safe environment in our churches, the Bishop has asked that the following be noted and shared with clergy and others who are responsible for liturgy and maintaining the churches.

Some Reminders about the Celebration of Mass

Celebrants are reminded that they should wear masks, except when speaking. If they are to be close to anyone in the congregation, they should wear masks.

They must wear masks when distributing Holy Communion.

Vessels containing hosts intended for the people must be placed on the altar **apart** from where the priest will be speaking.

Priests are reminded to disinfect hands before putting on masks and distributing Holy Communion and after, as well.

A special note about funerals and weddings:

Because of the reality that many people who attend a funeral or a wedding may not be regular church goers, it would be important to review safety protocols before the celebration begins.

Collections

Most parishes are accepting their collections by leaving baskets or receptacles for people to deposit them, either when they come for communion or before or after Mass. Obviously, this is not as effective as passing a collection basket. If a parish uses long-handled baskets and there is an empty row between parishioners, the usher could safely pass through the aisles collecting. Gloves should be worn and the collection should not take too long. If there is no way to accomplish this safely, pastors and administrators should use discretion and continue to take up the collection using fixed collection stations.

Altar Servers

In an effort to avoid an excessive number of people handling the sacred vessels, **it is not permitted at this time to use altar servers.** This will also keep the number of people in the sanctuary limited.

Choirs

Because of the increase of infections, please be aware that choirs **should not be gathering at this time.** This is because of the great difficulty in limiting aerosol and in order to avoid groupings of people. Singing at Mass should be limited to a cantor with an organist (separated by at least 10-12 feet) or a cantor-organist who would be protected by a screen of some sort.

Holy Water

Holy Water should not be left out in church in shared receptacles at this time. If parishioners want holy water, one idea would be to have prepared small bottles for them when they request it.

Special Events

Special Mass celebrations, Quincinieras, and so forth can be celebrated but only with the required safety protocols in effect. This includes masks, social distancing, etc. People should be made aware of these measures before they come to church for the celebration so that they can make arrangements to cooperate.

Tracing Information

It may become necessary to gather information on who is present at each Mass in order to trace those who may have been in contact with someone who is positive for Covid-19. Pastors and Administrators are asked to begin thinking about ways this might be possible for their parishes since all our churches are different.

One idea is that those who use envelopes are already “registered” and have in effect “checked in” at a particular Mass. Another idea is a sign in sheet at the entrance to the church or asking people to bring a paper with their name on it to place in the collection so a record can be maintained of who was at a particular Mass. It would be important to make known the fact that this information would be discarded after two weeks.

General Information

Pastors and Administrators are urged to review the safety protocols in place in the churches at this time. It would be beneficial to review the guidelines with parishioners in order to remind them. Safety protocols such as disinfecting churches, roping off pews and marking where people may sit should be reviewed.

It is important not to let our guard down and to be vigilant in observing all the protocols we have in place.

Traveling

It is especially important, at this time, for all clergy to be knowledgeable of travel restrictions due to the pandemic. It is absolutely essential that all make themselves aware of CDC restrictions, guidelines and regulations regarding quarantining and testing. This is essential because it is sometimes difficult or even impossible for priests to isolate in a rectory setting. It is, therefore, the responsibility of the priest traveling to be aware of these regulations.

The website of the Centers for Disease Control has information on travel to all countries:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/map-and-travel-notice.html#travel-1>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html>

For travel in and out of New York State:

<https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/covid-19-travel-advisory>