



Diocese of Wilmington

GUIDELINES FOR THE CELEBRATION OF

**ORDER OF CHRISTIAN FUNERALS
THE SACRAMENT OF MATRIMONY
THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM**

DURING THE CURRENT PHASE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

JUNE 8, 2020

Revised October 22, 2020

OVERVIEW

While the following guidance represents a directive from Bishop Malooly, all pastors, parochial vicars, deacons and other personnel are to follow all official governmental and public health guidelines enacted for the prevention of the contraction and spread of the COVID-19 virus, including limitations on gatherings, physical distancing, hygiene and sanitation measures and the use of personal protective equipment (PPE).

Pastors may choose to implement additional and more restrictive rules for public worship than those permitted as they take into consideration vulnerable members in their respective parishes and other issues specific to their communities.

Pastors may begin celebrating funerals, weddings, and baptisms at their discretion.

FUNERALS

- All previous guidance concerning the Celebration of the Eucharist must be followed.
- The Order for Christian Funeral Outside of Mass is highly encouraged when appropriate.
 - As per instruction 179 of the Order of Christian Funerals, the funeral liturgy outside of Mass is ordinarily celebrated in the parish church but may also be celebrated in a funeral Home. A deacon may also preside over the rite with the pastor's permission. Holy Communion is not to be distributed at this service. The proper vesture is alb and stole, no chasuble or dalmatic.
- Attendance at services in a church is limited to **60% (in Delaware) or 75% (in Maryland) of normal** capacity with 6 feet of social distancing. All attendees must follow social distancing guidelines, unless they are members of the same household.
- All in attendance must wear masks during the Mass or Service.
- Wakes, Viewings, and Visitations may not take place in any church until further notice.
- There is to be no procession of the casket. The closed casket must be up front, in place prior to the start of the Mass or Service.
- Eulogies are not allowed before, during, or after any Funeral or Service in the church.

- Only the celebrant, deacon, or parish lectors may proclaim readings.
- The use of cemetery chapels for final committal may only be used during inclement weather. No more than 10 people may be present for committal services in the chapels.

SACRAMENT OF MATRIMONY

- All previous guidance concerning the Celebration of the Eucharist must be followed.
- *Order for Celebrating Matrimony without Mass* is highly encouraged
 - Holy Communion is not to be distributed at this service.
- Attendance is limited to **60% (in Delaware) or 75% (in Maryland) of normal** capacity with 6 feet of social distancing. All wedding guests (including the wedding party but not bride and groom) must follow social distancing guidelines, unless they are members of the same household.
- All attendees must wear masks with the exception of the bride and groom.
- The formal procession of the bridal party **may continue** to be omitted; **if permitted, only one person should walk down the aisle (not in pairs), and six foot distancing should be maintained.**
- Only the celebrant, deacon, or parish lectors may proclaim readings.
- For the “Rite of Marriage,” the priest or deacon should stand behind the altar and the bride and groom should stand in front of the altar, to allow for social distancing.
- The wedding rings should be placed on a disinfected dish or small platter ahead of time by the bride or groom themselves. The rings should then be blessed on that same dish and then the groom and bride should pick up the rings from the dish themselves to place on their spouse’s finger.
- There should be no receiving line or gatherings at the conclusion of the ceremony.
- Guests must depart using social distancing.
 - If any type of program is to be used at the wedding, each guest must get their own individual copy and must be responsible for taking it with them upon leaving.

- Priests and deacons are encouraged to speak with each couple in advance to share this relevant information.

SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

- Reminder: All priests and deacons should now be using the newly revised *Order of Baptism of Children, 2nd Edition* which became obligatory on April 12, 2020.
- Communal baptisms are not allowed at this time. The Sacrament of Baptism is permitted only for one child at a time, unless those to be baptized are immediate family members.
 - Baptisms are not to be celebrated during Mass until further notice.
- Attendance is limited to **60% (in Delaware) or 75% (in Maryland) of normal** capacity with 6 feet of social distancing. All attendees must follow social distancing guidelines, unless they are members of the same household.
- All in attendance must wear masks. The priest or deacon should wear a mask during those portions of the service where he may be in close proximity to another person.
- The Baptismal font should be sanitized after each Baptism.
 - Fresh water should be used for each baptism and then properly disposed.
 - If the church baptismal font cannot be conveniently emptied and sanitized after each baptism (ie. large fonts with running water) then an alternative setup, such as using a large basin, should be used in order for this directive to be followed.
- All readings are to be proclaimed by the celebrant.
- The anointing with the oil of catechumen may be omitted.
- Parents are encouraged to bring their own cloth towel to dry the head of their child after being baptized.
- The priest or deacon should recite the *Ephpheta* Prayer but should not touch the child's mouth or ears as called for in the *Order of Celebrating Baptism*.
- A priest or deacon may use cotton swabs to apply the Oil of Catechumens and the Sacred Chrism. Used swabs must be properly disposed through burning or burying.