

General Policy Directives

1. Effective November 15, 2021, all parishes within the Diocese of San Bernardino may operate under the sacramental/liturgical/worship/ministry guidelines contained below.
2. Parishes, at the election of the Pastor/Administrator, may continue with more stringent requirements, if the parish is located within a low or very low vaccination rate zip code, as documented by the California Department of Public Health (CDHP), or based upon the pastor's assessment of his congregational needs and concerns.
3. Pastors/Administrators should re-emphasize to parishioners, staff and volunteers the critical importance of remaining at home if they are ill, or if a member of their household is ill, given these relaxed operational standards, as the pandemic continues to threaten certain communities within Riverside and San Bernardino counties.

Changes to Capacity/Social Distancing Regulations

1. Parishes may continue to offer sacraments, liturgies, and worship services indoors, without any COVID protocol restrictions, if indoor seating is 5,000 or less.
2. Parishes may continue to offer sacraments, liturgies, and worship services outdoors, without any COVID protocol restrictions, if outdoor seating is 10,000 or less, as weather conditions permit.
3. There are no limitations on seating capacity other than those given by the applicable fire department or city/county agencies for the parish buildings.
4. Although there are no limitations on seating capacity, parishes are still encouraged to maintain a three (3) foot distance between seats, both indoors and outdoors.

Changes to Sanitizing/Hygiene Protocols

1. Deep cleaning before and after each service is no longer necessary.
2. Parishes are encouraged to maintain a thorough once daily cleaning on Saturdays and Sundays, and during periods of high church use, particularly given the upcoming liturgical/holiday season.
3. Priests/ushers/deacons/sacristans are encouraged to use hand sanitizer, before and after services, to ensure safety protocols, given interaction with numerous individuals in the performance of their pastoral and liturgical duties.

Changes to Mask Requirement

1. Masks are no longer required, indoors, for vaccinated persons.
2. Priest Celebrants/Deacons/Ushers/Altar servers are strongly encouraged to wear masks, due to interaction with numerous individuals in the assembly and the parish, who may or may not be vaccinated.
3. Priest Celebrants, Deacons and Eucharistic Ministers should use masks when distributing Holy Communion.
4. Priest Celebrants, Deacons and Lectors may remove their masks if the assembly is at least 12 feet away from the Ambo; the Ambo should be disinfected after each reading.

5. Due to the risk of marginalizing or stigmatizing those who elect *not* to receive the vaccine, parishes are encouraged to post signage which states:

Parishioners/attendees/guests are encouraged to wear masks, if health conditions exist, or as a personal choice, to ensure maximum safety/precautions for all.

Changes to Liturgical/Sacramental/Worship/Ministry Directives

(Except as noted, the following items/areas may resume in the same manner as conducted pre-COVID pandemic. However, Pastors/Administrators may elect to maintain current COVID protocols or continue prior pastoral COVID directives, as deemed necessary/preferred by their parishes, due to continued COVID risk in their parish geographic area.)

1. *Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament* - Maintain three (3) feet of separation, if possible.
2. *Altar Servers*: No restrictions; masks strongly recommended.
3. *Baptisms* – No immersion fonts; continue current practice for baptismal water.
4. *Bulletins*: No restrictions.
5. *Candles* – No open flames outdoors, at any time.
6. *Capacity Limits* – Three (3) feet of separation recommended.
7. *Collection Baskets* – Pole extensions, if possible; passing baskets can be reinstated.
8. *Communion on the Hand or Tongue* – Continue current practice of one separate line for each; ensure that masks are worn by Celebrant, Deacon and Eucharistic Ministers when distributing communion.
9. *Communion Cup for Assembly* – Not at this time.
10. *Communion Cup for Concelebrants* – Individual cups are to be used for Priests and Deacons; sharing of cup recommended only if all celebrants are vaccinated.
11. *Confessions* – Sanitize seating at the conclusion of regularly scheduled service.
12. *Confirmations* - Continue current practice of cotton swabs for Chrism on forehead.
13. *Crucifixes/Crosses* – Kissing/touching not permitted by general congregation; priests may do so if crucifix/cross is sanitized after service.
14. *Dispensation from Mass Obligation* – 65 yrs. of age plus or those with health conditions.
15. *Funerals* – Sprinkling of casket with Holy Water is now permitted; incense may be also be used within the sanctuary and within the general vicinity of the casket; do not use in the direction of the attendees.
16. *Flowers* - Congregants may place flowers at statues of Blessed Mother, saints. Maintenance/ removal of flowers must be done by volunteer wearing masks and gloves.
17. *Graveside Services* – Adhere to the requirements of the cemetery operator.
18. *Holy Water* – Bottled individually for take home use only; no Holy Water in small fonts or Baptismal Fonts at this time; sprinkling of Holy Water of the Assembly or for religious objects is allowed.
19. *Hospitality* – No self-help; servers, whether volunteers or professional caterers, must continue to wear masks and gloves.
20. *Hospitality Seating* – Tables must be spaced a minimum of six feet apart; seating must be a minimum of three feet apart, whether indoors or outdoors. Masks are required at all times, except for eating and drinking.

21. *Incense* – No incense in processions or toward general congregation; permissible at altar during liturgical celebrations, sacraments and during funerals, as noted above.
22. *Live Stream Masses* – May continue, but not as substitution for obligation except as noted above for 65 yrs. and older, or those with significant health conditions.
23. *Masks for Parishioners/Attendees/Guests* – Honor system for general parishioners. Parishes are encouraged to post signage emphasizing that masks are preferred as they ensure optimum safety for all.
24. *Masks for Celebrants* – See “Changes to Mask Requirements” above.
25. *Masks for Ushers/Volunteers* – See “Changes to Mask Requirements” above.
26. *Meetings (Ministry/Administrative)* – Maximum of ten attendees, with masks and six feet distancing still required; 90 minute maximum is strongly recommended.
27. *Missalettes* – Permitted for purchase or distribution. If placed in church pews, hand sanitizing canisters are recommended to be placed at each end of the pew, for use by congregants, if desired.
28. *Photography* – Mask required for photographer; no masks for those vaccinated.
29. *Physical Distance* – Three (3) feet of separation recommended.
30. *Procession* – Continue three (3) feet of separation for all processions.
31. *Offertory*: No restrictions.
32. *Pastoral Greetings of Parishioners* – Refrain from hand-to-hand greetings unless celebrant is vaccinated; outdoor group/individual exchanges for less than fifteen (15) minutes is encouraged.
33. *Private Prayer/Devotion*: No restrictions. Given upcoming liturgical/holiday season, interest in private prayer/devotion may increase; thus, parishes are encouraged to place hand sanitizer canisters/wipes strategically in pews for use by parishioners.
34. *Receptions*: Indoor receptions after weddings, funerals etc. or for general fund-raising purposes are permitted; if indoors, masks are required, and seating must be minimum of three feet apart and tables must be placed six feet apart. See ‘Hospitality’ item above.
35. *Recessional*: No restrictions.
36. *Sacred Objects/Statues* – Kissing/touching not permitted by general congregation; priests may do so if object is sanitized after conclusion of service.
37. *Sanitation of Pews* – Daily on weekends or after major liturgical/worship event.
38. *Sanitizer for Priests/Deacons* – Continue availability and use, particularly when distributing communion on the tongue.
39. *Sanitizer for Eucharistic Ministers* – Continue availability and use.
40. *Sanitizer for Ushers/Volunteers* – Continue availability and use.
41. *Sign of Peace at Altar for Priests/Deacons* – Permitted if all are vaccinated.
42. *Sign of Peace among Assembly* – Not at this time.
43. *Singing by Cantors*: No mask requirements if cantor is 12 feet from another attendee,
44. *Singing by Choirs*: No mask requirements if spaced 12 feet apart from each other; no spacing required if all are vaccinated.
45. *Singing by Assembly*: No restrictions if masks are mandated by Pastor/Administrator for that service; if no masks, then not permitted indoors.

46. *Vestments* – Refrain from using common vestments.
47. *Visits to Homebound* – No mask required if minister (Priest, Deacon, or lay minister) is vaccinated. Vaccination is not required for homebound parishioner, but is required for Priest, Deacon and lay minister.
48. *Visits to Hospitals/Convalescent Homes* – Adhere to the requirements of the facility; vaccination not required for the ill patient, but vaccination is required for Priest, Deacon and lay minister.
49. *Votive Candles*: No restrictions.
50. *Weddings* – Masks required for general guests; no masks for bride/groom/wedding party if vaccinated or if all in party have had negative PCR test 72 hours prior to wedding.