



May 20, 2021

Given the new State of Massachusetts protocols that go into place on May 29, the following guidance is issued for the parishes of the Archdiocese of Boston

General guidelines

- **As of May 29, 2021**, vaccinated people are no longer required to wear masks or socially distance in our parishes.
- This statement applies to worship and other parish activities.
- Parishes and pastors will not be policing the population. Every parishioner and every family will be expected to make a sound, reasonable decision about when they are ready to take off their masks and be near other people. No pastor and no parish will be expected to ask people whether or not they have been vaccinated.
- The pastor has a high degree of discretion in the implementation of all of these changes. Some pastors may make changes quickly, and others may make them slowly. Pastors are encouraged to engage parish leadership in a conversation about how best to make the changes in their respective parishes.

Regarding communication

- The dispensation from the obligation for coming to Sunday Mass has not yet been lifted, and even when it is, if a parishioner is feeling ill they should remain at home.
- It is understood that different people will be ready to take off their masks and sit near one another at different times.
- Parishes should communicate that they are prepared to accommodate those who are ready to take off their masks and sit near others, and those who are not.
When a parish becomes aware that a COVID positive person has attended Mass, there should be some kind of general announcement at least on the

parish's website. Parishioners should be advised to keep an eye on the website, as that will be where such an announcement will be made.

Regarding the setup of churches

- Parishes should continue to make provisions for people who are not vaccinated and/or who are not yet ready come to sit near other people.
 - Perhaps this can be done by cordoning off portions of the church, in a respectful way, for socially distanced seating. If this is the option chosen, every pew can be used in the non-distanced section of the church, and markings adjusted accordingly.
- It is no longer necessary to regularly disinfect surfaces. Some pastors may decide to continue to do so for a time, but it is not required.
- Missalettes and hymnals may be used, and kept in the pews. Parishes may want to engage in significant conversation about whether and how they want to do this. The Office of Worship will make some recommendations and resources available on their website.

Regarding the celebration of the Mass

- Registration for Masses is no longer required, although pastors may desire it to continue for a period while they adjust the seating in their churches.
- Congregational singing is allowed, as are choirs. Pastors may use their discretion with regard to masks for their choirs.
- Altar servers may be used.
 1. In scheduling children as altar servers, a pastor may want to schedule members of the same family for a given Mass.
 2. It should be clearly communicated to parents that children may wear masks while altar serving.
 3. It is likely that a retraining of altar servers, both children and adults, will be necessary.
- Liturgical ministers, such as Lectors and Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist can be used.
 1. A retraining of these volunteers may be necessary.
 2. Parishes may wish to use this as an opportunity to reach out to new volunteers to fill these roles.
- A collection may be taken up by using a basket, preferably with a pole, since some people may still feel uncomfortable touching a basket.
- Pastors are encouraged to slow play a return to a shaking of hands at the Sign of Peace. It may well be that not everyone is ready for that, even if they are unmasked and sitting near one another. Other forms for the Sign of Peace could be used.
- Priests, deacons, and Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist should still disinfect their hands before distributing Holy Communion.
- Priests, deacons, and Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist are strongly encouraged to continue to wear masks during the distribution of Holy Communion.

- The bottle of hand sanitizer should be kept close at hand in case someone receives communion on the tongue. Pastors may exercise their discretion in this matter.
- Communion under both species is still not allowed at this time. A clear communication will go out to parishes when this practice may resume.

Regarding Pastoral Care

- Communion calls may resume normally, though it may be necessary or wise to retrain the ministers of Holy Communion in how to be effective and respectful of people's concerns in this ministry.
- Services in funeral homes, conducted by priests, deacons, and pastoral associates may resume, at the discretion of the pastor.
- The use of confessionals may resume.

Regarding other parish activities

- Not every parish is going to be able to restart everything at once. A priority should be given to the liturgy, and then to pastoral care, and then to other activities such as faith formation and youth ministry, and finally to parish social activities.
- Food and drink may be served at parish activities.
- Since masking and social distancing are still required in public schools in Massachusetts even after May 29, we are not yet certain about what faith formation programs for children will need to look like in the fall. The programs will certainly be allowed and in person, but we do not know yet about masking and distancing requirements. We will keep you advised.