



April 16, 2021
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Archdiocese of Boston

REVISION TO COVID PROTOCOLS – April 16, 2021

This document is in two parts. The first part has one protocol that is effective immediately. The second part has several protocols which, if the numbers trend in the right direction from now to mid-May, will become effective on Pentecost Sunday. We will provide you final guidance during the week leading up to Pentecost Sunday, but no later than Thursday, May 20th.

Effective Immediately

Parishes may carefully plan and hold processions.

- There can be an entrance and recessional procession, involving the priest, the deacon, and any appropriate liturgical ministers, as long as all of the people in the procession and all of the congregation are wearing masks. Ministers in the procession should maintain a six-foot distance from each other in every case.
- Outdoor processions, such as May Processions and Corpus Christi Processions, can also be held, within the same masking and distancing guidelines. To maintain distance in an outdoor procession, careful shepherding of the procession will be required.

Effective on Pentecost Sunday

If the case numbers, positivity rates, hospitalization rates, and deaths from COVID improve through the course of April and early May, the following will be allowed to start on Pentecost Sunday:

- **Congregational singing may resume**
 - Between now and Pentecost, we will continue with the current protocol – only Acclamations and Mass parts may be sung. Starting on Pentecost, all hymns and the responsorial psalm may also be sung.
 - Members of the congregation must continue to wear masks while singing.
 - Since we are still required to disinfect surfaces, hymnals and missalettes are still not allowed. Therefore, parishes may choose to prepare one-time worship aids which would be handed out and taken home after the Mass. Parishes could also put the words or music to the hymns on their website, and then point people to using their smart phones to access the site. Parishes could also project the words to the hymns if they have the right equipment to do so.
 - Whether printing a worship aid, or posting music or text online, all copyrights must be respected. We recommend parishes use <https://onelicense.net>, which offers reprint and streaming licenses for a very large number of music publishers. We also recommend making use of music in the public domain. Parishes are responsible for being sure that all copyrights are being respected.
 - A pastor may decide that congregational singing cannot be done safely in his parish at this point and may continue to disallow it.

- **Choirs may resume singing.**
 - Singers should stand in a straight line, all facing the same way, six feet apart, and not in the traditional curved formation.
 - The choir should be standing as far from the congregation as possible in any parish's liturgical space.
 - Well-fitting masks must be worn by choir members and instrumentalists. The Office of Divine Worship has resources on their website to help music directors find good masks for singing.
 - Particular care should be taken to be sure that choir members, like all liturgical ministers, know that they should not come to Mass if they are not feeling well, even if they are on a schedule.
 - Choir rehearsals should be scheduled carefully, and significant breaks taken in which the space can be aired out. Large ventilated spaces, like the church or a school gymnasium, should be used for rehearsal, and not a small choir room. Masks and distancing must be used during rehearsals as well as at Mass. See the Office of Divine Worship website for more recommendations on choir rehearsals.
 - If music stands or other similar furnishings are used by multiple people, inasmuch as possible they should be disinfected between uses.

- **Prepackaged food and drink may be used at parish functions.**
 - There should still not be coffee and donut type gatherings after Mass.
 - After picking up their pre-packaged food or drink, people should proceed immediately to the place where they are eating.
 - Coffee should not be served.
 - Particular care should be taken to be sure that people are distanced while consuming their food or drink.
 - Masks should be worn at all times except when a person is particularly eating or drinking – this should not in any way be seen as a way to get around wearing masks.
 - The space in which this is happening should be ventilated as highly as possible, and outside is certainly safer than inside.
 - Any group that is serving food in any way at a parish function must have the direct permission of the pastor, and the pastor has absolute discretion to decide if this is appropriate or can be done safely. Many pastors may well choose not to allow this at this time.

- **Planning can proceed for summer functions, such as Vacation Bible Schools and Youth Group activities.**
 - These functions must be carried out safely.
 - Flexibility should be built into the planning. We do not know what the state protocols will be during the summer, and no one can guess right now.
 - Overnight activities of any kind, and any activities that require travel, should be approached very cautiously. No one knows at this point what will be allowed. This is especially true of any interstate or international travel. Parishes should be very, very cautious about putting up money for trips such as these that may well have to be canceled.

Everyone is waiting anxiously for the rules on mask wearing, social distancing, and the cleaning of surfaces to be relaxed. Should any of those restrictions be relaxed by the state any time soon, we will immediately issue new protocols to take those changes into account. For now, all Parish summer plans should include masks and distancing.