



THE DIOCESE OF BELLEVILLE

February 23, 2022

Dear Priests, Deacons, Parish School of Religion Coordinators and Catechists,

As you are aware, we recently advised the Catholic school families in the Diocese of Belleville that beginning on Tuesday, February 8, 2022, the requirement to wear a mask all day in school is being modified. Students at certain times of day would not have to wear a mask if they do not want to do so. However, specific situations may require a mask for a brief period of time (such as, but not limited to, attending Mass, groups in tight spaces, etc.).

We want to continue to stress that we must always keep the most vulnerable in mind and, that when in doubt, parishes should always err on the side of caution. That being said, the following updates pertaining to, but not limited to, Parish School of Religion Programs, liturgical celebrations and social events include:

PARISH SCHOOL OF RELIGION (PSR)

Faith formation programs (including but not limited to PSR, RCIA, parish sponsored scripture studies, youth groups, retreats, meetings, etc.) should now inform participants that masks are optional. However, for those who are immunocompromised or uncomfortable meeting in person, reasonable efforts should be made to provide resources, materials, and support, so that their faith formation and participation may continue from home whenever possible.

CHURCH CAPACITY AND MASKING

- Beginning Ash Wednesday, March 1, masks will be optional at Mass and all liturgical celebrations.
- Churches may be at 100% capacity. It could be helpful to reserve a section in the church for those who wish to maintain social distance.

CELEBRATION OF THE LITURGY

- Hymnals, votive candles and holy water may all be in use.
- Liturgical Ministers – greeters, ushers, gift bearers and servers – may resume their regular roles.
- Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion may assist with the distribution of Communion. Ministers of Holy Communion are required to wear masks during the distribution of Communion and to sanitize hands (before and after distribution).
- Congregational singing, choirs and instrumentalists are allowed.
- Processions may resume and continue.
- The Sign of Peace: It will be the decision of individual worshipers as to how they will offer the sign of peace. There are various ways to extend sign of peace by gesture.
- Holy Communion: For the foreseeable future, Holy Communion will remain only under the form of the consecrated HOST. Communion on the tongue will be permitted, but it is recommended that those wishing to receive in this manner present themselves at the end of the Communion procession.

Father Steven Beatty

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SACRAMENTS

Funerals and Weddings

- Follow same guidelines as Mass.

Baptism, Confirmation and Anointing of the Sick

- At this time, the use of cotton swabs or cotton balls for anointing should continue.

Reconciliation

- Face-to-face may continue.

CHILDREN'S LITURGY OF THE WORD, NURSERIES AND VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

- All may resume. Sanitizing protocols should always be followed during time of pandemic or not.

ADORATION CHAPEL

- Adoration chapels may continue as normal.

POST-CELEBRATION OF MASS AND LITURGIES

Sanitizing and Disinfecting

- It is no longer required to sanitize the church on a weekly basis. However, it is recommended that during flu and cold seasons, disinfecting high-traffic and high-touch surfaces resumes for a period of time.
- After every Mass (daily and weekly), it is still required that chalices and patens be washed with soap and water. The vessels must first be purified by the priest, deacon or instituted acolyte after the distribution of Communion or after Mass. At the conclusion of Mass, after purification, the chalices and patens should then be taken to the sacristy and washed with soap and water.

OTHER

Pastoral/Nursing Home Visits

- Pastoral visits may resume with caution in cooperation with facility and county guidelines.

Funeral Lunches, Meetings, Social Events, Fish Frys, Parish Festivals

- Capacity may be 100% of area/building space.
- If serving food, food safety precautions must continue to be maintained per the local county health department.
- Staff and volunteers serving food are highly encouraged to wear masks and gloves.

The past two years have been an extremely challenging time for everyone – physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. We have appreciated your patience, understanding and hard work as we navigated the waters of the unknown with the pandemic. We will continue to support you in your ministries and thank you for allowing us to accompany you.

DIOCESAN REOPENING COMMITTEE

Deacon Douglas Boyer, Jonathan Birdsong, Sue Huett Asbeck, Fr. Steven Beatty

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