

June 8, 2021

Phase 5 COVID-19 Protocols (Clarification)

The state of Illinois is expected to enter Phase 5 on Friday, June 11, which means that all sectors of society will fully reopen. The Diocese of Joliet will follow Illinois public health guidelines and offers the following details for all church services effective June 11, assuming the state does enter Phase 5.

If the state does not enter Phase 5, we will continue with the previously issued “Bridge Phase” protocols.

Masks

In accordance with current Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance, fully vaccinated individuals can participate in indoor and outdoor activities, large or small, without wearing a mask or physical distancing. (“Fully vaccinated” refers to people who are two weeks past their last required COVID-19 vaccine dose.) Individuals who have not been vaccinated should continue to wear masks.

- To provide for varying comfort levels, it is suggested that a seating area be set aside, if possible, for parishioners uneasy with sitting with unmasked individuals.
- Fully vaccinated priests, deacons and extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion are no longer required to wear masks and face shields.
- Per CDC guidance, children younger than 12 should continue to wear masks since they have not yet been approved for vaccination.

Capacity and registration

Full capacity is allowed, and registration is no longer required. However, pastors may want to retain their registration systems in case a spike in COVID-19 cases occur in the coming fall and winter.

Vaccination status

Employers have the legal right to ask staff if they have been vaccinated. However, the diocese will not require employees or the general populace to provide their vaccination status. Yet we strongly encourage vaccinations for all ministers.

Dispensation

The dispensation to attend Sunday Mass remains in place for the time being, with the intention of providing our parishes and our parishioners the opportunity to navigate and adjust to these new guidelines and protocols.

Hand sanitizer

It is recommended that hand sanitizer be available, but not required for entering/exiting the church and/or at the reception of Holy Communion.

Church sanitation

Sanitation of the church is required only once a day, per the CDC.

Holy water fonts

Small holy water fonts or stoups with stationary water should remain empty. However, mechanically filtered and chlorinated baptismal fonts can be used.

Chalice

Because of the potential transfer of saliva, we will continue to refrain from offering the chalice at Communion for the time being.

Communion on the tongue

Communion on the hand is still the preferable option. Communion on the tongue is allowed **at the pastor's discretion**.

Altar servers

Altar servers are allowed.

Singing

Cantors may now sing without masks. However, restrictions remain for congregational singing. Choirs are still not allowed.

Wind and brass instruments

Wind and brass instruments are still not allowed.

Paper worship aids

Missals, prayer books, bulletins, posters, etc., are allowed for display and use.

Collection baskets

Baskets on a pole are allowed, but baskets passed from hand to hand are not.

Presentation of gifts

Presentation of gifts is allowed.

Sign of peace

The sign of peace will continue to be made without physical contact. Offer a friendly wave to your neighbor.

Food

Food is allowed per pre-pandemic sanitary guidelines.

Office and social gatherings

Capacity at office and social gatherings can be at pre-pandemic, full capacity levels.

NOTE: Guidelines for summer and fall youth programs, including the start of the 2021-2022 school year, will be issued later. When in doubt, follow CDC guidance: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/communication/guidance.html>