

May 12, 2021

Revision to Diocese of Joliet COVID-19 Protocols

With the change in Illinois to the Bridge Phase coming Friday, May 14, we are revising our procedures at the parishes and expanding church capacity to 60%. Implementation of the 60% will vary from parish to parish. We encourage dialogue between neighboring parishes and/or deaneries. Additionally, these new protocols should be implemented according to each parish's pace.

The following plan applies to all liturgical celebrations in our churches, including Masses, weddings, funerals, baptisms, confirmations, etc., beginning on May 14. For confirmations that have already been scheduled under current limits, it is at the pastor's discretion to adjust the capacity to 60%, if possible.

- 1. Masks are still required.**
2. Air flow and ventilation are the KEY elements to prevent the spread of viruses.
3. Six-foot minimum distancing is no longer required but at least arms-length distance is recommended between households.
4. At this time, dispensation from the requirement to attend Mass is still in place.
- 5. If people do not feel well, they SHOULD NOT ATTEND services or gatherings.**

Every parish has different church layouts, community needs, and other special circumstances. Changes will happen at the parish level as decided by the individual pastor using the following as a guide:

- 1. Masks will be required inside for the foreseeable future.**
2. Sanitization is still required, but once a day is adequate per the CDC.
3. Handwashing is still required, especially before eating or touching the face.
4. We will still require registration with a limit of 60% capacity.
5. With the move to the Bridge Phase and continued vaccinations, we can accommodate our communities in a manner closer to what was the norm before COVID-19. This can be accommodated by increasing capacity at Masses.
 - a. Provide seating areas that accommodate the different sensitivities of parishioners.
 - i. Some may still not feel safe unless there is the 6-foot separation.
 - ii. Others may feel confident enough to sit at arm's length from others outside their households.
 - iii. Pastor may elect to provide various seating areas in the church for parishioners with different comfort levels or set the seating distances at six feet for some Masses and less for other Masses.
 - iv. All pews may be used, yet at least an arms-length distance is recommended between households. It is not necessary to skip rows of pews in sections where parishioners are comfortable with reduced distancing.
 - b. Remember that ventilation is key.
 - c. Parishes need to maintain air systems and regularly change filters.
 - d. Consideration should be given to air systems that kill viruses in the air.
6. Parishes will not have to be recertified.

Procedures for liturgical services at this time:

1. We will **not ask** the general populace about vaccinations.
2. We can ask our ministers, deacons and other volunteers to be vaccinated.
3. Vaccinations are strongly encouraged for all ministers, especially those who will be at the altar.
4. Water fonts are still to be left empty.
5. As before, no chalice at communion.
6. As before, no physical sign of peace.
7. Mask and a face shield are still required to give Communion.
8. Hands must be sanitized before receiving Communion.
9. Pastors and Deacons may process, without servers.
10. Eucharistic ministers and lectors are allowed.
11. Bridal processions are allowed.
12. No presentation of gifts.
13. No passing of the collection baskets.
14. Singing is still not allowed.

Social gatherings: Capacity is a maximum of 60%, up to 250 people indoors, and 500 people outdoors. These new capacity limits will affect school-related events such as graduations, and further guidance will be provided to principals and school pastors this week.