

ARCHDIOCESE OF NEWARK

Updated Directives During the Covid-19 Pandemic
May 25, 2021

Introduction

Given the reinstatement by the Bishops of NJ of the obligation to attend Sunday Mass and the lessening of restrictions from the state, the following is provided as an immediate update to the May 4 directives.

Effective May 28, masks will no longer be required for **fully vaccinated persons**. If not fully vaccinated, persons are strongly encouraged to follow CDC guidance and wear a face mask in public settings. Masks are still required on public transit and in health care settings, prisons, child-care facilities and schools, among other places. People will no longer be required to socially distance indoors or outdoors, (May 28), although unvaccinated persons should continue to maintain a safe distance from others.

Effective June 4, all indoor gathering limits will be removed.

Although these directives represent a reduction of pandemic restrictions, the local pastors/ administrators/chaplains can impose stricter regulations as needed. These may include wearing masks, social distancing, and signing in for Mass or activities.

These directives apply to all indoor and outdoor events.

Mass Attendance

Cardinal Tobin and the Bishops of New Jersey are reinstating the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation effective June 5/6, the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ. To read the official statement, please visit: <https://www.rcan.org/>

Parishioners should be made aware of the reinstatement of the obligation.

Updated Directives

- Churches and parish facilities may return to 100 per cent capacity with no social distancing for both indoor and outdoor services and activities, as of June 4, 2021.
- Parishioners should be informed that if they are vaccinated, they are no longer required to wear a mask. It is not required for parishioners to show proof of vaccination.
- Anyone not fully vaccinated should wear a mask. Any vaccinated person preferring to wear a mask should feel free to do so.
- Churches and meeting spaces should continue to be sanitized after each liturgy, event or meeting.

Opening Rites

- Opening (and closing) processions may take place at any liturgy.

- Sprinkling rites may occur as long as fresh water is blessed for use each time and reverently disposed of after the liturgy. Holy water should not be placed in fonts or bowls, but it may be placed in large holy water dispensers with lids.

At St. Margaret's, we will continue to begin Mass without a procession. The Easter season is over so the need for the sprinkling rite is not needed. As you know, we now have touch-less holy water fonts.

Preparation of the Gifts

- Collections may be taken up. It is preferable to use long handled baskets.
- Parishes may still leave baskets at the doors of the church for offerings.
- Parishioners should also be encouraged to use electronic giving.
- The gifts of bread and wine, as well as the collection, may be brought forth by members of the assembly.

At St. Margaret's, we will continue using the baskets at rear of the church for the collection and while we will continue to have the bread and wine in the sacristy, if anyone wants to bring these gifts up in the offertory procession, notify the ushers or the priest.

The Communion Rite

- The Sign of Peace should be offered but continue to be made without physical contact.
- Communicants will continue to receive Communion in the hand. If not fully vaccinated, they lower their masks to consume the host, then replace their masks. The chalice is still prohibited for the assembly.

Music

- Choirs are not required to wear masks or social distance. However, pastors and music directors may impose stricter regulations as needed.
- All musical instruments may now be used.

At St. Margaret's, we are attempting to have a choir sing before the usual summer break.

Hymnals and Bulletins

- Hymnals and reusable booklets are permitted for use.
- Parishes may continue to use electronic media, e.g., projector and screen, for the people's participation.
- Bulletins and other handouts may be left for parishioners to pick up or they may be handed out by ushers/greeters.

At St. Margaret's, we have ordered the hymnals & missalettes. They should be here for our use mid-June.

Confessionals

Confessionals and reconciliation rooms may be used, but the Sacrament of Penance may still be celebrated outside of the confessional as needed. Consideration should be given to the comfort level of both priest and confessor.

At St. Margaret's, we will resume the use of our reconciliation rooms. However, any penitent can request to celebrate the sacrament in the body of the church.

Clergy

As stated above, priests do not have to wear masks except:

- They must wear masks when distributing Communion
- They must wear masks when administering the sacraments in close proximity to the recipients (Baptism, Confirmation, First Communion, Matrimony and Anointing of the Sick)

- During the Eucharistic Prayer, if a priest is not wearing a mask, there must be a cover over the hosts being consecrated at the altar.
- They have the option to wear masks at all other times in the liturgy.

Lectors and Cantors

Lectors and cantors who are fully vaccinated do not need to wear a mask.

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

- All Extraordinary Ministers of Communion (and clergy) must sanitize their hands AFTER they themselves consume Communion and BEFORE they distribute to the assembly.
- Fully vaccinated ministers are only required to wear a mask when distributing Communion.

Livestreaming Mass

Livestreaming may continue for those who are ill; those who have reason to believe that they were recently exposed to the coronavirus or another serious or contagious illness; those who are confined to their home, a hospital, or nursing facility and those with serious underlying health conditions.

At St. Margaret's, we will continue to place the Saturday evening mass on our website, but it will not be every weekend as has been the case.

It still needs to be noted that even with precautions in place, it is still possible to contract Covid-19 in church. All liturgical ministers should be aware that as parishioners return to Mass, some are experiencing fear and anxiety. There are also parishioners who have underlying health conditions which add to their apprehension. It is important that all ministers comply with these directives in order to ensure the safety of all those attending parish liturgies.

For more safety information:

<https://nj.gov/governor/news/news/562021/approved/20210503b.shtml>



**“The liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed;
at the same time, it is the font from which all her power flows.
For the aim and object of apostolic works
is that all who are made sons [and daughters] of God
by faith and baptism should come together to praise God
in the midst of His Church, to take part in the sacrifice,
and to eat the Lord's supper.”**

**Every effort should be made to restore the fullness
of the Church's liturgical practices, since
"Good celebrations foster and nourish faith.
Poor celebrations may weaken and destroy it."**

--Music in Catholic Worship 6

**Celebrating the liturgy well
fosters the participation of the entire assembly,
facilitates an encounter with the risen Lord,
and forms members of the church as disciples of Christ.**

Thank you

*for all of the ways that you are welcoming people,
keeping them safe and at the same time
providing the best spiritual experiences as possible during this time.*

