

Update 6: Public Celebration of Masses and Precautions Following Infection by COVID-19 and Variants

After consultation with the Presbyteral Council and unanimous approval on 18 May 2022, the Most Reverend Felipe J. Estévez, Bishop of St. Augustine, approved the following guidelines.

References:

- a. DOSA Guidelines for Resuming the Mass Sacraments_20200504_FINALa
- b. Update 1: Clarification regarding policy for personal protective equipment (PPE)_20200520
- c. Update 2: Bp Ltr to Pastors 20200521 re Confirmations
- d. Update 3: Bishop amendment to guidelines_20200611
- e. Update 4: Public Celebration of Masses and the Sacraments_20200619
- f. Update 5: Public Celebration of Masses and Precautions following Infection by COVID-19

These updated *Guidelines* are provided to give direction and recommendations for clergy-priests and deacons-as the COVID-19 virus continues to evolve. Vaccinations are increasing and new cases are trending to be less severe. With this in mind and following the guidance of the Center for Disease Control (CDC), the following guidelines are in place. Updates will be provided, should unforeseen changes in CDC guidelines or infection rates occur.

New variants of the COVID-19 virus are airborne at 15 minutes or more of face-to-face contact and are spread through respiration.

MASKS AND OTHER FACE PROTECTION

The wearing of face masks is optional for all and should be considered a personal preference. This includes:

- Parishioners
- Celebrants
- Altar Servers
- Ushers
- Choirs

SIGN OF PEACE. Should remain contactless.

NO CURRENT RESTRICTIONS ON:

Note: Always keep personal safety in mind. Wear facemasks where appropriate, regularly use hand sanitizer when hand washing is not available.

- Reconciliation
- Anointing of the sick.
- Baptism
- Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)
- Matrimony
- Funerals
- Parish gatherings- at the pastor's discretion
- Processions (entrance, offertory, exit)
- Holy Water

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- Collection of offerings

DISTRIBUTION OF HOLY COMMUNION.

- At **Pastor's Discretion**, Holy Communion may be distributed to the faithful under both species: the Sacred Host and the Precious Blood.
- If the Pastor elects NOT to reintroduce reception of the Precious Blood by the faithful:
 - In a con-celebrated Mass, the principal celebrant and concelebrants may intinct. The deacon may receive from the chalice, but is not permitted to intinct.
 - The chalice must be wiped with a purificator by the minister and turned for reception from a different portion of its rim.
- If the Pastor elects to re-introduce reception of the Precious Blood by the faithful:
 - The chalice must be wiped with a purificator by the minister and turned for reception from a different portion of its rim.
- For the health and benefit of both the minister and the recipient, **Holy Communion in the hand is still the preferred option** during this extraordinary time of COVID-19.
- Holy Communion may not be distributed with gloves, nor may it be received in the hand if a member of the faithful is wearing gloves or is holding other objects in his/her hands. Hands should be sanitized before distribution.
- Reverence and care to ensure that the Eucharist is immediately consumed by all recipients is imperative.

Guidance for reception of Holy Communion on the Tongue:

Note: Although the decision to provide Communion on the Tongue is approved in parishes at pastoral discretion, sound hygiene practice is not an option or a matter of pastoral discretion. Disinfection of hands with an alcohol-based sanitizer after each communicant who receives on the tongue is a requirement if this option is going to be permitted in parishes of the Diocese of St. Augustine.

- Those who wish to receive communion on the tongue should be encouraged to move to the end of the receiving line.
- The Pastor should not feel pressured to provide Communion on the tongue. As the infection by this virus is a moisture-borne one, the transmission is via the breath and mouth and, therefore, among medical experts the concern is greatest when the minister places his/her hands near the mouth of a communicant. Placing the host in the hands without contact is considered the least risky with regard to viral transmission.
- The delegation for this decision in these extraordinary times rests solely with the Pastor (and not parochial vicars, deacons, or other visiting ministers or lay-

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ministers). Provided a willing minister can safely and properly distribute it, with all of the aforementioned hygiene and disinfection in place, Holy Communion on the tongue may be offered. (See Update 4 [reference e above] for more on this.)

Communion References – See Update 5 for more information on Communion

PARISH PROPERTY CLEANLINESS AND ISOLATION & PRECAUTIONS FOR ADULTS FOLLOWING INFECTION.

- Continue to provide hand sanitizer, face masks, and disinfecting wipes for those who wish to use them.
- Parishioners or staff who are well but have a sick family member or have come in contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 should:
 - If fully vaccinated, including boosters, or tested positive in the last 90 days with a positive viral test.
 - Wear a mask around others for five days of the last contact.
 - If symptoms present - get tested at least five days after contact. Note: The five-day counter starts ON the day of exposure.
 - There is no need to quarantine
 - If not fully vaccinated (including booster) or have had the Johnson & Johnson vaccine more than two months ago.
 - Quarantine for at least five days after the last contact.
 - Wear a mask when around others.
 - If you test negative at five days, you do not need to quarantine, but should wear a mask around others for an additional five days.
 - Do not travel during the quarantine period.
- Parishioners or staff who test positive should contact and follow the guidance of their healthcare provider.
 - Quarantine at home, for at least five days after the date of the positive test.
 - Do not share dishes, drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, towels, etc., with others in your home.
 - Clean and disinfect all high-touch surfaces in your home.
- Those with *severely compromised immune systems* should remain diligent with distancing, face masks, and sanitization. Consider attending Mass virtually