

## Covid-19 Protocol Update 20 April 2021

We welcome the statement of the Governor removing limits, and agreeing to comply with recent Supreme Court decisions protecting our freedom to worship. The Diocese of Oakland has from the beginning of the pandemic taken all appropriate steps to preserve the health and safety of our parishioners, while providing for our people's right to worship God. The following guidelines apply to Masses, weddings, funerals, first communions, baptisms, confirmation, Quinceañeras—all sacraments and rituals.

### Capacity

There is no longer a government-restriction on capacity for services, provided that six-foot distancing is observed, masks are worn, and basic hygiene is followed. Each parish will need to establish what that means in terms of capacity. Remember that family members may be seated together.

### The Eucharist

Extraordinary Ministers may be used as needed but should be kept to a minimum to assure strict adherence to required protocol. If, at any point, a minister touches a communicant's hand or tongue, proper hand hygiene should be practiced immediately before continuing the distribution of communion.

It is strongly encouraged that the faithful receive Communion in the hand, however provision should be made so that anyone who wishes to receive on the tongue may do so, from a priest. If the priest does not feel comfortable with this, he may delegate to another, trained minister.

Distribution of the Precious Blood remains suspended, indefinitely.

With caution we can begin to expand Eucharistic outreach to the homebound by priests, deacons, and extraordinary ministers. Both the minister and recipient should be fully vaccinated. Family members can also be trained to administer the sacrament to their loved ones. Not all hospitals or nursing homes allow outside ministers at this time, so be sure to check before making arrangements.

### Music

Only cantors, small choirs, and other appointed ministers are allowed to sing at indoor services. They must be masked and maintain physical distance from each other and the congregation. The only exception to being masked is a presider, lector, or single cantor at the time they are performing their specific function.

Since congregational singing is not yet allowed, hymnals should not be returned to pews. Single-use worship aids are allowed.

At outdoor services, cantors, small ensemble choirs and other appointed ministers are allowed to sing, maintaining 6 feet of physical distance from each other and the congregation—12 feet of physical distance if they are not wearing face coverings. Congregational singing is allowed as long as the people wear face coverings and maintain physical distancing.

### Holy Water

Holy water stoups should remain empty. If a baptismal font filters running water, it may be used, but it is recommended that water for baptism be blessed in individual vessels.

### Provisions for Various Parts of the Mass

Ministers of the Mass (priests, deacons, lectors, cantors, etc.) should remain masked in processions, however if they remain six feet from the faithful while serving in their roll—speaking, reading, leading the community in prayer—they may remove the mask for that purpose. Altar servers should be masked at all times.

At the discretion of the pastor, and if circumstances allow for it, offertory collections may return, as well as the presentation of the gifts.

The Sign of Peace must remain without physical contact.

### Misc.

Cleaning of surfaces between services need not be as thorough as before. We now know that the virus is primarily airborne, and that surfaces are not as risky.

Greeting the faithful before and after Mass should ideally be outdoors, distanced, with everyone masked. Social gatherings like coffee hours are still not allowed.

The dispensation from the obligation to attend Sunday and Holy Day Masses continues until further notice. Although the faithful are dispensed from their obligation to attend Mass, they are encouraged to spend time in prayer on Sunday (such as following a livestream Mass or participating in a spiritual or corporal act of mercy).

Unless vaccinated, those who are at higher risk of COVID-19 (e.g., those who are sixty-five and older or who have underlying health conditions) are to continue staying at home. Likewise, anyone with a temperature, a cough of any sort, and anyone feeling ill, should not come to the church for a visit or for any ceremonies.

Live-streaming is still encouraged where possible.

As always, please contact John Renke in the Office of Worship [jrenke@oakdiocese.org](mailto:jrenke@oakdiocese.org) if you have any questions or concerns.