



May 19, 2021

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

When we took up the work of embracing the call of the new evangelization to become a missionary archdiocese, we looked at some key good habits which would be essential to the success of our work. Among those good habits highlighted in *Unleash the Gospel* were “a spirit of cooperation” and “a spirit of innovation.” While it was not in my mind at that time how these virtues would need to be lived out during a pandemic, I am exceedingly proud of the way our priests, parish staffs, and parishioners have exhibited and exemplified these good habits over the past 14 challenging months.

As we transition away from a heightened state of emergency around the COVID-19 pandemic and take steps toward normality, I ask you to remember these good habits and for each of us to renew our commitment to living them out together. As we have done throughout the pandemic, we must continue to live with a “spirit of cooperation” to adapt to the circumstances we face and, importantly, to care for and protect those who are most vulnerable. We will need a “spirit of innovation” to aid us in determining which changes to keep in place and which ones can and should be relaxed.

While Archdiocesan-wide COVID liturgical protocols are relaxed – in alignment with guidance from national and state public health officials – we realize there are diverse situations and a variety of needs across the six counties of southeast Michigan. Therefore, I have asked pastors to determine how best to adjust parish protocols for the particular needs of their parishes. Each of us is called to keep in mind our need to care for the common good – including a deliberate consideration to receive the COVID vaccine for the good of oneself and one’s neighbor. This care for the common good entails a particular care and love for those who are most vulnerable among us, in this situation the elderly and the immunocompromised.

Additionally, these considerations are meant to permit and encourage the reverent offering of and active participation in the Sacred Liturgy. The updated COVID liturgical protocols are as follows:

New COVID Liturgical Protocols

1. Those who are fully vaccinated may wear a face-covering and social distance but are no longer required to do so in churches.

UNLEASH THE GOSPEL

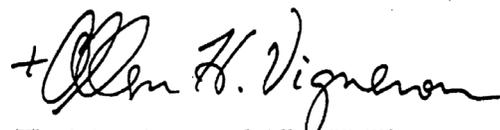
2. Those who have not been fully vaccinated are to continue wearing face-coverings and to practice social distancing to protect themselves and others in churches. Because a parish community – and our society – requires mutual trust and a commitment to the common good, each individual is asked to make the best decisions for himself as well as for others. Parishes do not have the responsibility to verify who is and who is not vaccinated.
3. Each parish is to provide a portion of the church – with a size to be determined by the pastor – where social distancing and face-coverings are consistently maintained.
4. All unvaccinated Catholics are encouraged to consult with their doctor about the vaccines. Resources to assist Catholics in understanding the moral use of COVID vaccines can be found at www.aod.org/vaccines.
5. The Sign of Peace may resume with the normal wording, “Offerte vobis pacem / Let us offer each other the sign of peace,” allowing parishioners and families to make their own determinations about how widely to share some sign of peace.

COVID Liturgical Protocols which remain in place

1. Parishes should continue to provide signage about current COVID protocols.
2. Parishes should keep doors open to ventilate churches as they are able.
3. Parishes are encouraged to continue the COVID arrangement of vessels for bread/wine on the altar.
4. Clergy and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion should continue to wear masks while distributing Holy Communion.
5. Parishes are encouraged to maintain sanitization stations at the locations of the distribution of Holy Communion.
6. Parishes are to continue to refrain from the distribution of the Chalice to the faithful (except for a Bride and Groom on their wedding day).

These revised liturgical protocols should be a sign that we have made great progress from March 2020. But we still need to be vigilant in the weeks and months ahead. As we continue to adapt to a new reality, it will be crucial that each of us exercises heroic patience with one another. For some these changes are a welcome adjustment. For others, it will take more time to feel comfortable with the adjustments. For all, this is an opportunity for Christian charity and a renewed commitment to exercise another *Unleash the Gospel* virtue: unusually gracious hospitality.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Allen H. Vigneron". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

The Most Reverend Allen H. Vigneron
Archbishop of Detroit