



Friday, May 14, 2021
Feast of St. Matthias the Apostle

Dear family in Christ,

Greetings in the Risen and Ascended LORD! May these days of preparation for the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost be blessed for you all. Come, Holy Spirit! I write this letter to include a very important announcement from Bishop Persico and the Diocese in lieu of the CDC's most recent directives yesterday. Effective immediately per the Bishop these new directives are in place for every parish in the Diocese of Erie. I have also attached the actual decree from the Bishop himself and the news release from the Diocese so that you can have it for your own reading and information.

When you come to Mass and to church beginning this weekend things will look very different. First, there will no longer be any ropes separating our pews as the Bishop's decree permits all of the pews in our churches to be used. *This still requires us to maintain social distancing when we come to Mass so that individuals and/or families maintain a distance in the pews of at least six feet apart.* Our ushers will be present to assist in this.

Secondly, masks are no longer mandatory to enter our church building or any building on our parish campus. Those who are not fully vaccinated are strongly urged to wear masks while in church and in our campus buildings, both for their protection and that of others. *One thing that I would like to make clear. There will be no "mask shaming" or "vaccine shaming" here at this parish. It is left to the judgment of each individual and their families whether they will choose to wear a mask or not or get vaccinated or not. We will not be asking if parishioners and guests are vaccinated or not and it is expected that you not be asking that of other parishioners and guests as well.*

Finally, the last major change will be that our confessional in the day chapel will now be used again to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The "temporary confessional" will now again be the cry room and extra seating for Mass. All of the other directives are things that are already in place here at the parish and will continue to be in place. They can be reviewed when you read the actual decree from the Bishop. This includes the procedure for receiving Holy Communion at Mass. We will still come down the two side aisles while maintaining social distancing and return to our pews via the center aisle or the wall aisles.



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This has been a very difficult and challenging year for all of us. To be sure, we are not out of the woods yet, but it is so encouraging and hopeful for the light to be getting brighter and brighter as we return to life as it was pre-pandemic. We still need to be vigilant of our own health and the health of others. Remember, this is one of the greatest acts of charity you can do both for yourself and for others. I understand that this news will affect you all in different ways and that for some it comes as a great joy and for others it may fill you still with some apprehension. Wherever you fall on this spectrum, please know that you have a pastor and a parish that cares for you and loves you. We are all here for you whenever you choose to return to Holy Mass and your full participation in the life of your parish. You are missed, you are loved, you are cherished, and you are always prayed for by me. I am always here to talk with you and pray with you through any issues and/or concerns that you may have. I love you all!

Yours always in the LORD Jesus,

Fr. Dan

Rev. Daniel R. Hoffman
Pastor

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DECREE

REVISING THE PANDEMIC PROTOCOLS FOR THE CELEBRATION OF PUBLIC MASSES

As Bishop of the Diocese of Erie, in consultation with the Presbyteral Council, I hereby abrogate the pandemic protocols of May 21, 2020, September 21, 2020, and May 10, 2021 as well as any other measures and replace them with the following revised protocols for the celebration of public Masses in the diocese:

PRELIMINARY REMARKS

1. The use of all pews is permitted.
2. Pastors and others should presume people's good will in following these directives. They should not inquire of anyone as to whether or not they are vaccinated.
3. Individuals are no longer required to wear masks when in church. Those who are not fully vaccinated are strongly urged to wear masks while in church, both for their protection and that of others.
4. Dispensation from the obligation to attend Sunday and holy day Masses remains in place.
5. Livestreaming of Masses (both daily and Sunday) should continue wherever feasible.
6. Standing permission continues to be given to priests to trinate on Sundays and holy days and to binate on weekdays.
7. The use of confessionals is once again permitted.

GENERAL NORMS FOR ALL MASSES

1. The following actions remain suspended:
 - Distribution of the Precious Blood
 - Placing of holy water in fonts
2. Entrance and closing processions are permitted, but not the offertory procession. The water, wine and hosts should continue to be prepared beforehand on a table in the sanctuary.
3. Priests may greet parishioners before or after Mass, provided that it is done outside and they do not shake hands.
4. The regular scheduled use of servers, lectors, musicians, and choirs is permitted.
5. The verbal exchange of the sign of peace among the faithful, without physical contact, is permitted whenever it is considered opportune.

6. It is recommended that common surfaces be wiped down between Masses whenever another service will occur within 24 hours.

Entering and leaving

7. Parishioners who are not feeling well are to stay home.
8. It is not the pastor's responsibility to police who is attending.
9. The doors to the church are to be propped open before and after Mass when possible.

Seating

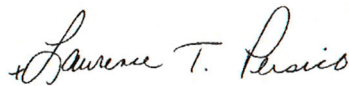
10. Nothing is to be in the pews. Hymnals and other similar items are still not to be used.
11. Hand sanitizer is to be available at the church entrance for parishioners.
12. Collection baskets, with or without handles, are still not to be used in the pews.

Communion Rite

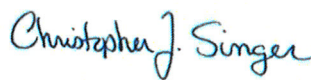
13. Concelebrants and deacons should continue to receive by intinction, except for the one who will purify the chalice.
14. Only those who are fully vaccinated should assist with the distribution of Communion.
15. The Bishop strongly recommends Communion in the hand, but the right to receive on the tongue remains in place.
16. It is recommended that those approaching for Communion should sanitize their hands before entering the line to receive Communion.
17. There is to be a table with purificator or ablution bowl and hand sanitizer at each station for the distribution of Holy Communion. Those distributing Holy Communion who accidentally physically contact a communicant should wipe their fingers on a purificator or use the ablution bowl, and then use the hand sanitizer before proceeding to the next communicant.

I direct that this Decree be published and take effect immediately, anything to the contrary notwithstanding.

Given at the Chancery
of the Diocese of Erie
on this 14th day of May, 2021



The Most Reverend Lawrence T. Persico, JCL
Bishop of Erie



The Reverend Christopher J. Singer, JCL
Chancellor



NEWS RELEASE

DIOCESE OF ERIE

www.ErieRCD.org

5.14.21

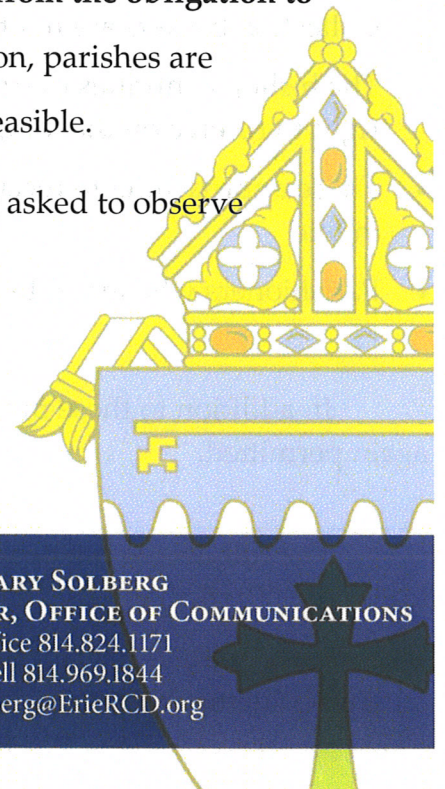
Diocese revises protocols for the celebration of public Masses

After consultation with the Priest Council, the Most Rev. Lawrence T. Persico, bishop of Erie, has issued a decree revising the protocols concerning the celebration of public Masses, effective immediately. While the bishops of Pennsylvania have had and continue to have the freedom to set the protocols for Catholic worship, they have consistently taken the mitigation recommended by the CDC, the Pa. Department of Health and the Governor's Office into consideration when making decisions.

Many pastors are reporting a significant increase in the numbers of people who are returning to Mass in person now that they have been vaccinated. It is essential for the public to be aware that even as restrictions are being eased, **the dispensation from the obligation to attend Sunday and holy day Masses remains in place.** For this reason, parishes are encouraged to continue livestreaming Mass as an option wherever feasible.

The main parameters parishes in the Diocese of Erie are being asked to observe are listed on the following page.

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- Individuals are no longer required to wear masks when in church. Those who are not fully vaccinated are strongly encouraged to wear masks while in church, both for their protection and that of others.
- The use of all pews in churches is now permitted.
- The doors to the church are to be propped open before and after Mass when possible.
- Entrance and closing processions are now permitted.
- The use of servers, lectors, musicians and choirs is now permitted.
- A verbal exchange of the sign of peace is now permitted among the faithful.
- Common surfaces still need to be wiped down between Masses that are less than 24 hours apart.
- Priests may now greet parishioners before or after Mass, provided it is done outside and that they do not shake hands.

Among the protocols that have been in place and remain in effect:

- Although the Eucharist continues to be offered at Mass, the distribution of the Precious Blood still is not permitted.
- Holy water may not be placed in fonts.
- Nothing may remain in pews, including hymnals.
- Hand sanitizer is to be available at the church entrance for parishioners.
- Collection baskets are not to be used in the pews.
- The bishop continues to strongly recommend that Communion be received in the hand, but the right to receive on the tongue remains in place.
- Those approaching to receive the Eucharist are encouraged to sanitize their hands before getting in line.
- Parishioners who are not feeling well are to stay home.

In addition to these protocols for the celebration of Mass, the use of confessionals is once again permitted.

The full decree can be found on the diocesan website at www.eriescd.org/bishop/decrees.html under the "Particular Law" listing.

This release, with information pertinent to the public, can be found at www.eriescd.org/covidstatements.html