



*Worship and Sacraments in
the Time of Public Health Concern
Directives and Guidelines for the
Diocese of Youngstown ~ March 2020*

In light of the current health situation and directives from the Ohio Conference of Catholic Bishops and Governor DeWine, the following directives and guidelines are issued for the Diocese of Youngstown. These guidelines take in to consideration how to best proceed under these unusual circumstances while remaining pastorally sensitive to the People of God and adhering to restrictions issued by the State of Ohio and Diocese of Youngstown. Realizing that the current health environment changes daily, check here frequently for updates and further changes.

➤ **Celebration of the Eucharist**

On March 16, 2020, the Roman Catholic Bishops of Ohio issued a letter temporarily suspending all publicly celebrated Masses and liturgies at least through the celebration of Holy Week and Easter, April 12, 2020. The bishops of Ohio dispense the Catholic faithful who reside in their respective dioceses and all other Catholics in Ohio from the obligation of attending Sunday Mass through Easter Sunday. At this time no decision has been made beyond April 12, 2020. Priests are encouraged to offer Mass daily, if possible, in a non-public way for the intentions of their parishioners and for healing and comfort to all those who are ill and the safety and well-being of those caring for them.

During this time Bishop Murry has granted permission for the Masses for Various Needs and Occasions, (#45 For the Sick and #48 In Any Need) to be used on Lenten weekdays.

➤ **The Act of Spiritual Communion**

Viewing a live-streamed, online, or televised Mass is an opportunity for the faithful to remain connected to the Sacrifice of the Mass during this difficult time. A complete schedule of daily televised Mass can be found under the “Media” tab on this website. Another source includes: www.watchtheMass.com from the CatholicTV Network offering daily Mass in English Sunday through Friday and in Spanish every Sunday.

The Act of Spiritual Communion has long been a Catholic understanding that when circumstances prevent one from receiving Holy Communion, it is possible to make an Act of Spiritual Communion, which is a source of grace. Spiritual Communion is an

ardent desire to receive Jesus in the Most Holy Sacrament and lovingly embrace Him at a time or in circumstances when one cannot receive Him in sacramental Communion. The most common reason for making an Act of Spiritual Communion is when a person cannot attend Mass. Acts of Spiritual Communion increase our desire to receive sacramental Communion and help us avoid the sins that would make us unable to receive Holy Communion worthily.

Below is a recommendation on how to make a 'spiritual communion' when unable to participate in Mass. These can be adapted based upon personal and family needs:

1. Gather with others in your household and begin a time of prayer with the sign of the cross.
2. Take time to read and reflect upon the readings from Sunday Mass. Scripture readings can be found at www.usccb.org. Additionally, a televised schedule of Mass is available at under the "Media" tab of this website.
3. Share prayer intentions quietly or aloud.
4. Pray the Lord's Prayer.
5. Offer a prayer for healing, strength, or forgiveness or any prayer available during the coronavirus pandemic. If viewing Mass, offer a prayer during the normal time of Communion.

PRAYER FOR SPIRITUAL COMMUNION

My Jesus, I believe that you are present in the Most Holy Sacrament.

I love you above all things and I desire to receive you in my soul.

*Since I cannot at this moment receive you sacramentally,
come at least spiritually into my heart.*

*I embrace you as if you were already there
and unite myself wholly to you.*

Never permit me to be separated from you.

Amen.

6. Close with the sign of the cross

➤ **Baptism**

All parishes are asked to observe some temporary practical norms concerning the Sacrament of Baptism. During this time, while Baptisms are still possible based solely on pastoral urgency, it is highly recommended that they be postponed, unless it is a dire circumstance, to insure the safety of all involved. If a baptism is held there are to be no

more than 10 people present. Family members in vulnerable populations should be encouraged to stay home.

➤ **Reconciliation/Confession**

During Lent it is important that the faithful experience God's mercy in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. To minimize the risk of exposure, certain adaptations and precautionary measures have been implemented. Penitents should contact their parish priest to arrange an appointment for reconciliation/confession. Safe and physical distancing will be observed along with standard precautionary sanitizing and disinfection measures. The place where reconciliation/confession takes place might be different than the normal location; however it will maintain a setting of confidentiality and the opportunity for the penitent to remain anonymous. The Sacrament of Reconciliation may NOT be celebrated virtually (i.e. video chat, facetime, via phone etc.) and General Absolution is not permitted.

➤ **Confirmation**

All Confirmation ceremonies at least through April 12, 2020 are postponed. Bishop Murry will grant delegation to pastors to confirm their candidates scheduled for Confirmation during this period at a time after it has been determined safe and is convenient to the parish. Confirmation ceremonies scheduled after April 12, 2020 will be considered at a later date.

➤ **Weddings**

If possible, weddings should be rescheduled for the time being. Any wedding that is held must be done with no more than 10 people present and who do not exhibit any symptoms and are not considered high-risk. All precautions and sanitizing must be observed.

➤ **Funerals**

A Funeral Mass with no more than 10 people present and who do not exhibit any symptoms are permitted. However in light of the current circumstances and for the safety of all, it is encouraged that families consider a private burial with a Memorial Mass celebrated at a later date. Please contact the pastor of the parish and the local funeral director before finalizing any plans to discuss alternative options. Public viewing/calling hours in Church vestibules, chapels or other spaces in the parish are to be avoided.

➤ **Anointing of the Sick ~ Holy Communion to the Sick and Homebound**

All priests have been provided special guidelines and precautionary measures to be taken in the event they are called to minister the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick to those who are ill and to those confirmed as a COVID-19 patient. All hospital and health care facility guidelines and directives are to be followed with no exceptions. Priests in the high-risk group (i.e. over the age of 60) or those with chronic illness or pre-existing conditions may not be able to accommodate requests at this time. Efforts will be made to ask other priests (not part of a high-risk group) to assist when possible.

➤ **Palm Sunday ~ Holy Week Services ~ RCIA Catechumens/Candidates**

Please consult the “*Media*” tab of this website frequently for updated schedules of televised Palm Sunday, Holy Week and Easter Sunday services or your local parish for any plans for live-stream services. RCIA Catechumens and Candidates will be contacted by their pastors and RCIA teams to determine an appropriate time to properly celebrate their initiation into the Church.

These directives/guidelines currently remain in effect by order of Bishop Murry and will be revised or changed should any further directives be issued by the Governor of Ohio, the Bishops of Ohio, or Bishop Murry.