



## Sacramental Guidelines for Reopening

# BAPTISMS

These guidelines for celebrating baptism in a church reflect the updated guidance by government officials, healthcare professionals and church authorities.

These guidelines are based on current requirements for groups of 10 or less in the church at any time, exclusive of ministers.

Parishes should adapt only as necessary, however, **being careful not to violate social distancing, face covering and sanitizing practices.**

Parishes or pastors may **not** alter the number of allowed worshippers, social distancing, face covering, or sanitizing guidelines contained here.

### Preparation

1. Use of a temporary receptacle for the water is advised. Placed in front of altar if possible, but in a space in which people are not forced to gather tightly.
2. The floor of the church should have tape marks around the font/receptacle indicating where parents should stand observing the required social distancing from the priest.
3. If the family and guests are to be met at the door of the church, marks indicating a six- to eight-foot distance should be on the floor of the entryway indicating where all should stand.
4. The first or second row of pews (depending on distance from the font/receptacle area) should be marked for parents, godparents and other guests. Marks should be placed at least six to eight feet apart for these guests indicating where they should sit. Further, there needs to be six- to eight-foot distance in front and behind guests if multiple pews need to be used.
5. Masks must be worn by all participating in the baptism including godparents and other witnesses. Masks should be worn for the entire service by all participating with the exception of the baby if under two years old. Given the IDPH and CDC guidelines, those with breathing difficulties should be advised to stay at home, but if there is a need to attend, can be exempted from this requirement. However, those individuals must observe the strictest of social distancing from anyone not living in their domicile.
6. The font/receptacle must be thoroughly cleaned and wiped with bleach wipes prior to every use. It must be allowed to dry before using.
7. Fresh water must be used for each individual baptism.
8. A table should be set up near the receptacle to hold supplies needed and should be sanitized before every use. It is recommended that the table be covered with a glass top to allow for easy cleaning and disinfecting after the baptism.
9. Both the Oil of the Catechumen and the Chrism should be pre-dipped on small cotton swabs or Q-tips and placed on glass plates on the table for use. Do not use oil stocks directly.

10. The face shield for the priest should be placed on the table.
11. Hand sanitizer for the priest and parents should be placed on the table as well.
12. If possible, the priest/deacon should wear a “washable” stole and alb.
13. If a guide to the service is to be given to godparents or guests, the guide must be disposable and not reused for other services. A simple xerox copy will suffice.
14. A list of preparation requirements should be given/sent to parents at least five days before the baptism. These include:
  - Make sure all participants bring face masks.
  - Remind all guests to check temperatures the morning of service and stay home if someone has become symptomatic.
  - Those in a vulnerable population should be encouraged not to attend.
  - Photo opportunities inside the church will be limited to one photo.
  - Please respect the limit on the number of guests that may participate. The total number excluding the priest/deacon is 10 including the child.
15. The family and guests should take their temperatures and check themselves for symptoms the day of the baptism and alert the pastor if they have become symptomatic.

## **Rite of Baptism**

1. In an abundance of caution, a properly trained “greeter,” or the priest/deacon, or some agent of the parish should meet the family and guests outside the church or in the vestibule and hand out masks if they have not brought their own. The greeter will require the use of hand sanitizer and remind guests that anyone who is ill or has a temperature or been exposed directly to Covid-19 in the last 14 days should not enter the church nor participate in the service.
2. The priest and guest should don masks at the beginning of the service before the Greeting Rite begins. The priest and guest should have sanitized their hands already. If not, it must be done before the Greeting Rite begins.
3. Priest should remind all present to please follow the precautions that are in place including keeping the mask on and sitting in designated pews at designated markers. He should remind godparents and guests that they should stay in their designated seats for the entire service. (There is no requirement that the godparents “as witnesses” need to be in close proximity to the child and parents.)
4. Maintain social distancing for the Greeting Rite. The priest should sanitize hands before he signs the baby on the forehead and sanitize again after.
5. For the Liturgy of the Word, parents should be seated together in the first pew, or in reserved marked seats, again observing social distancing from others present. Priest can remove his mask for Liturgy of the Word.
6. After the priest concludes the Liturgy of the Word, parents should be invited with the child to move forward to the positions marked on the floor near the font/receptacle.
7. Priest/deacon should now don a face shield. Let parents and guests know this is for the safety of both the child and the priest.
8. Priest should keep mask on while performing the actual blessing of water through the presentation of the candle because of proximity to infant and parents.

9. After presentation of garment and lighting of candle, parents should return to their designated pew. Priest can then remove mask for concluding rite.

## **Post Rite and Cleaning**

1. The parish will need to establish guidelines for any photo opportunities within the church. This may be very difficult due to social distancing. All, including the priest/deacon, **must** remain masked for any pictures. The preference is for pictures to be taken outside the church.
2. For the sake of safety, it is not allowed to schedule back-to-back baptisms given the need for having one group leave the church and another enter, with the cleaning and set-up that needs to take place between each rite. The parish will need to judge its timing based on all requirements and order. Minimally one hour between services should be scheduled at the start. As a parish and ministers become more familiar with the time that is needed, they may adjust this.
3. All pews, instruments, and receptacles used during the rite must be sanitized after the service. All of above must be completely clean and dry before reuse.
4. Church door handles and plates must be cleaned after each baptism once all have left the church.
5. If unlocked and used, church restrooms should be cleaned immediately after all have left the building.
6. Those cleaning the space should wear masks and gloves.
7. Blessed water and cotton swabs with holy oils should be disposed of properly. Gloves should be worn during the disposal.
8. Please remember that masks distributed to family and guests may not be collected and reused by the parish.
9. Greeter or pastor should take an inventory of supplies after the service and replenish accordingly.