



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.

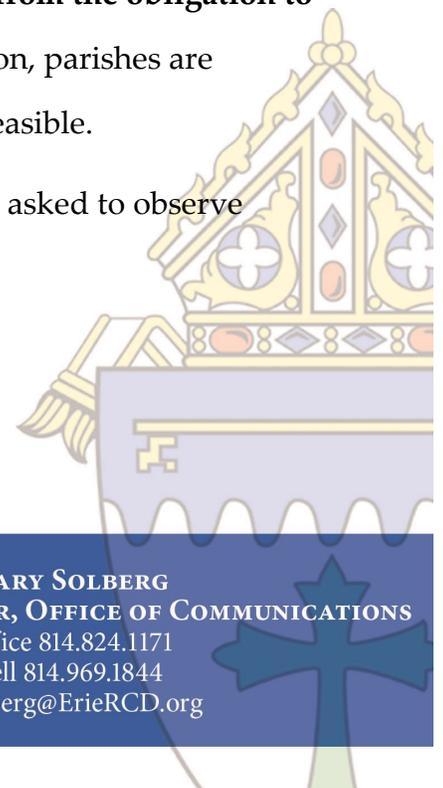
Many pastors are reporting a significant increase in the numbers of people who are returning to Mass in person now that they have been vaccinated. It is essential for the public to be aware that even as restrictions are being eased, **the dispensation from the obligation to attend Sunday and holy day 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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ANNE-MARIE WELSH
DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS
Office 814.824.1167
Cell 814.746.6889
amwelsh@ErieRCD.org

MARY SOLBERG
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS
Office 814.824.1171
Cell 814.969.1844
msolberg@ErieRCD.org



- 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.eriercd.org/bishop/decrees.html under the “Particular Law” listing.

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