



Roman Catholic Diocese of Portland

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Office of Lifelong Faith Formation

TO: Parish Sacrament Coordinators

CC: Pastors/Administrators

FROM: Georgette Dionne, Coordinator of Children and Adult Ministries, and Lori Dahlhoff, Director

DATE: March 1, 2021

RE: Celebration of Initiation Rites in Spring 2021 (Covid19)

The following draws together guidance provided in various documents the diocese has provided to priests during Covid19 and current guidelines to help prepare for parish celebrations of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist in Spring 2021.

Priority is given to initiating the elect on Easter weekend, either during the Vigil or one of the Sunday Masses, because of the baptismal character of these liturgies. Priority at the Easter Vigil should go to those to be baptized and any family members or close relations also prepared for confirmation and/or first holy Communion.

Candidates – baptized non-Catholics - may be welcomed into Full Communion, confirmed, and receive first holy Communion at any Mass during the Easter season through Pentecost (May 23, 2021) and beyond.

Baptized Catholic teens or adults are to be confirmed by the bishop. Three dates are scheduled in Spring 2021 for teens and adults. These are provided at the end of this memo. If this is not possible, priests need delegation from the Bishop to *confirm validly apart from the Easter Vigil* any persons, children or adults, baptized as Catholics.

Unless pandemic conditions change, the procedures outlined below will apply when celebrating Confirmation and first holy Communion with children. [The current schedule for these celebrations is posted here.](#) Priests needing delegation will receive these after mid-March.

Preparations

- Follow all the same protocols for [public mass](#), including:
 - Attendees over age 2 are to wear face coverings throughout the liturgy. Be prepared to make appropriate accommodations for a candidate who for health reasons is unable to wear a covering of any kind.
 - Maintain physical distancing both in seating and for movement.
 - People from different households may sit in the same pew if they maintain 6-foot spacing among other household groups.
 - Consider having godparents/sponsors sit in separate pews from initiates and only come forward together at the time of Baptism and Confirmation. The elect or candidate(s) and his/her/their family should only be seated in the same, single pew as the godparent/sponsor(s) if there has been prior contact between godparent/sponsor and the initiate and his/her family. (i.e. they are already part of one another's "COVID-19 bubble" for safe, social interactions)

- One-time use worship aids may be printed with responses and songs to encourage full participation in the liturgy (please follow copyright/reprint procedures).
- With an awareness of the length of a Mass that includes the additional time necessary to administer the initiation sacraments (and thus the amount of time people are gathered), simplify those parts of the Mass that have shortened forms like readings, singing and other elements provided in the rituals including the Directory of Masses with Children.
- As with any Mass during this time, there is to be no reception or group celebration following the Mass.

General protocols for all ritual moments

- The priest, the initiate and his/her godparent/sponsor are to wear a facial mask when they approach one another, other than for appropriate ritual moments of baptism, confirmation, or to consume holy Communion.
- When processing towards the priest to be baptized, anointed, receive first holy Communion, each pairing of an initiate and his/her godparent/sponsor should be spaced in a manner so that there is appropriate physical distancing between them and the initiates and godparent/sponsors who are standing before and behind them.
- The priest is to sanitize his hands before and after the conferral/reception of the Baptism, Sacrament of Confirmation and Holy Communion to all initiates.
- Group photos may be taken safely using the following procedures that limit potential exposure:
 - Being in the photo is completely voluntary. Individuals who feel uncomfortable with the situation must be assured they are under no obligation to be in close proximity for a photo.
 - Everyone keeps face coverings in place while getting in position.
 - If the group is small, space everyone 6 feet apart from one another.
 - For larger groups,
 - place people from the same “household bubbles” next to one another when possible
 - you may organize individuals from different households immediately next to one another as long as the whole process takes less than 5 minutes and people only remove face coverings for the few moments that photos are actually being snapped.
 - Masked: take photos with everyone keeping masks in place. Limit time near one another to less than 10 minutes.
 - Without masks: Give a signal for when those in the photo should briefly remove their face covering while photos are being snapped (usually less than 30 seconds). Counting to three verbally and with fingers in the air works well for such a signal. Instruct folks to replace masks right after photos are captured and have them disperse quickly so limit the total time close to another to 5 minutes or less.
 - Do not post on social media any pictures of people from different households immediately next to one another without all parties wearing masks. This is to save you/the parish from dealing with undue concern from those who will be unaware of measures taken in safely making the photo.

Baptism

- Baptism should be done by “pouring” water over the elect’s head (three times) rather than by immersion. (RCIA #226)
- If there are multiple initiates
 - Only one set of elect and godparent(s) should be at the font at one time with others waiting at least 6 feet away.
 - It is advisable to provide a separate basin to capture the poured water separate from the baptism font to minimize the possibility of virus transmission.
 - provide a fresh, clean towel for each person to use in drying after baptism.
- Clothing with a White Garment: It is recommended that the elect come to the celebration of initiation already dressed in white. At this time, the parish should not give to the initiate or family any other kind of white garment, blanket or stole as souvenir.
- Handing **On** of a Lighted Candle: This takes place as usual.

Confirmation

- Refer to directions on page 7 of the [Confirmation Ritual provided in Summer 2020](#) for guidance on how to celebrate the Sacrament of Confirmation.
- There are two options for anointing with the sacred chrism:
 - Administered as usual with the thumb. After each Confirmation, the minister can wipe the thumb on a purificator, then sanitize the thumb, and confirm the next person. The small amount of Chrism needed can be poured into a vessel beforehand. This avoids repeatedly touching the contents of the same oil stock.
 - Administered using a fresh cotton ball/swab for each person: The Holy See has indicated that confirmation with an instrument does not threaten the validity of the Confirmation. The priest picks up with his right hand, dips the tip in the Chrism, and, with the ball/swab, anoints the forehead. Each instrument is placed in a container for proper disposal after the liturgy. Following Mass, the cotton swab/balls used for the anointing must be disposed of by burning or burying.
 - Prior to the start of the liturgy, a small table should be placed in the front of the sanctuary that would hold the items necessary for the chosen means of administering Confirmation [Sacred Chrism, a purificator, hand sanitizer, sufficient cotton balls/swabs (1 for each candidate) and an empty container (with a lid) to act as a receptacle for the disposal of the balls/swabs used for Confirmation]. A separate hand-washing station for the priest with a lemon wedge should be set up in the sanctuary, perhaps at or near the credence table, before Mass begins.

Holy Communion

- Initiates should receive the Eucharist consecrated at that same Mass in which he/she is receiving first Holy Communion.
- Communion will be offered only under one species: the consecrated hosts.
 - Individuals with celiac-sprue disease may receive in the form of a low-gluten hosts if they have met [requirements detailed here](#) or in the form of the consecrated wine with each person drinking from a separate chalice.
- Communion is to be received in the hand with the communicant stepping to the side before removing his/her face covering to consume the consecrated host. The communicant will then replace the face covering and return to his/her seat.

RCIA Lenten Retreats

Local parishes are encouraged to host a short retreat for the elect and candidates during the final weeks of Lent. The diocese will also offer a state-wide virtual afternoon of reflection on Sunday, March 21, 2021 from 2 to 4pm on Lifesize.

[Click here](#) to register for the virtual reflection.

Registration Deadline for virtual afternoon of reflection: March 15, 2021

Celebration of Confirmation for Catholic Teens & Adults

Intended for those baptized in the Catholic Church as infants and need to complete their initiation sacraments. [Click here to register and access needed forms.](#)

- Friday, April 16, 2021 7:00pm Notre Dame Church, Waterville
- Friday, April 30, 2021 6:30pm St Bruno Church, Van Buren
- Friday, May 14, 2021 7:00pm St Maximilian Kolbe, Scarborough

Registration due no later than 2 weeks before chosen celebration (Mondays April 5, April 19, or May 3 respectively)

The Neophyte Mass is scheduled for 10am Sunday, May 30, 2021 at the Cathedral, Portland. Participation details will be shared at the beginning of May.