

Eucharistic/Baptismal Practices
COVID-19 Times
June 16, 2020

As we take this next step as a community into the celebration of the Holy Eucharist and the administration of Holy Baptism, we must be diligent in keeping before us the health and safety of our congregants, volunteers and clergy. As with the other guidelines that were distributed, attention should be given to the practices that each individual congregation must use to meet congregational needs as well as space limitations. Clear communication, training and attention to detail are critical. Intentional conversations among clergy, especially on a deanery level, are encouraged to offer support and direction. The diocesan staff is also available to answer any questions that you have.

Please read through these guidelines carefully.

Holy Eucharist

*All must wear masks

Exceptions: Soloists who are at least 26ft from the nearest person (on all sides) may remove a mask when singing. We are maintaining the guidance of no choirs and no congregational singing, even when masked. Preachers who are at least 10ft from the nearest person (on all sides) may remove a mask while preaching (if using a microphone). The same is true of lay readers (10ft all sides). If this is not possible, masks must be worn. It is recommended that a congregation use one lay reader per service (if they are not masked while reading) to reduce contamination of the microphone. *Everyone must replace his/her mask after signing/preaching/reading.*

Social distancing, contact tracing, sanitation guidelines are still in effect as per our guidelines

*Celebrant is masked at all times except consumption of bread and wine¹

Celebrant and all in the altar party practices thorough hand washing prior to the service. He/she will use hand sanitizer prior to preparation of elements that are already on the altar. Lavabo is acceptable but cannot be a replacement for proper hand sanitizing. Hand towels should not be shared.

¹ The Celebrant will only remove his/her mask and consume **after** the trays with wafers have been removed from the altar.

Any acolytes or Eucharistic ministers will also practice the same hand cleaning/sanitizing rituals.

*Bread for celebrant on paten covered by burse, cloth or veil. Only the Celebrant will receive the wine.

*Trays of wafers are prepared ahead of the service. The priest/altar guild member must wash hands thoroughly, wear a mask and use fresh, clean, disposable gloves when this task is performed. Each wafer is placed in a small paper cup (think small medicine cups from the hospital). The entire tray is then covered in plastic wrap (not only cloth). These trays can be brought up during the preparation of the table.

*The Celebrant continues with the Eucharistic Prayer as normal.

*After the conclusion of the Eucharistic Prayer, the trays are removed from the altar by EM, the priest or an acolyte wearing a mask and placed on a separate table, apart from the altar. *We know that each congregation will have to work out the logistics of this movement.* It is only once the trays have been removed that the Celebrant may remove his/her mask and consume the bread and the wine. Again, the celebrant is the only one who can receive from the priest's host and receive wine from the chalice.

*The plastic covering is removed from the trays. The ushers are then asked to invite members of the congregation up to remove a paper cup from the tray and take it back to their seat. Practice social distancing. ***Everyone is required to practice hand hygiene before removing a paper cup from the tray.*** It is highly recommended the parents assist small children with the cups. Also, be aware and accommodating to those who are not able to come forward.

*The priest directs congregants on proper disposal of the paper containers. They are not to be left in the pews. One suggestion is to have paper bags in the pew for the disposal of used paper cups. The church can also have designated receptacles at the door to the church. These will then be collected and disposed of properly and reverently by the priest

*The priest and congregation practice hand hygiene at the conclusion of the distribution of communion

*The service continues with the Post Communion Prayer.

Contact Tracing

Also, to help with contact tracing and to avoid a “bottle neck” at the doors, congregations may use online reservations. They may also have a single card in the pew that individuals may use to fill out contact information. But, as always, virtual and online options are always recommended.

Baptisms

Because of the steps that are needed to do this safely, when possible, only have one baptism at a service. Make accommodations in your regular baptism schedule to plan for this. If not possible, these guidelines provide framework for multiple baptisms.

Water may be placed in the font for the Thanksgiving over the Water. However, ***this water will not be used for the baptism.***

One cruet of water is available for each individual baptized.

The parent(s) will hold the child (if an infant or small child), not the celebrant.

All will wear masks during the entire service. Of course, the exception to this being the CDC recommendations of age guidelines for mask wearing.

The priest will not use a baptismal “shell” or his/her hand to baptize. Water will be poured directly from the cruet onto the head.

A clean cloth (one per individual) will be available. The parent will dry the head of the baptized. If an adult, they will dry their own head. These towels will not be shared.

A small dish with a single cotton ball with the chrism oil already placed on it will be available for each individual. After the baptism, the priest will sanitize his/her hands before placing the thumb in the oil on the cotton ball. The individual will be chrismated. Hand sanitizing will occur after each chrismation.

The water in the baptismal font will be properly disposed of after the service.

Hand hygiene will be performed after the baptism(s).

Navigating through protocols is challenging and presents us with questions to make these practices both meaningful and safe. Also, guidelines may change (even from city to city) as we move through various Phases/Stages in the

pandemic. Please be diligent in keeping up to speed on diocesan, state and local guidelines. We are all connected in this process and by following these guidelines we not only provide safety for our congregants, but also honor the spirit of collegiality among clergy and congregations.