

## Phase 3 and Holy Week COVID-19 Guidelines

*As has been the case over the last year, we will continue to maintain our practices regarding worship, distancing and mask wearing. It is very promising to see things moving in a more hopeful direction with vaccines becoming more prevalent. However, this is not the time to let down our guard. Instead, keep the faith and hold strong to our well tested and very successful worship guidelines. **Congregations must maintain distancing and masking for all services and events no matter which phase or capacity has been approved by the state or parish. Also, contact tracing is still recommended.***

### FAQ

#### **Can we segregate vaccinated and un-vaccinated parishioners?**

*This can set up a very difficult scenario for churches to enforce. Plus, there still remains families in which there are vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals within the household. Therefore, we do not recommend this practice at this time. The CDC has recently released guidelines on small group gatherings of vaccinated individuals.*

#### **What does it mean when the Louisiana "Open Safely" guidelines don't dictate capacity restrictions?**

*Even though the most recent Phase 3 Open Safely guidelines do not mandate capacity restrictions, distancing **is still required**. So, the perception may be that it is 100%...but remember that is not at the sake of masks and distancing.*

#### **Can we resume coffee hour?**

*Since masks have to be removed to eat, we do not suggest that parishioners gather in close proximity (inside) to eat and drink. Outdoor, socially distanced gatherings are acceptable (think lawn chairs with either pre-packaged food or bring-your-own).*

#### **What about bulletins, prayer books and hymnals?**

*It is allowable to print bulletins and also to place prayer books and hymnals in the pews. Some churches switch empty pews from one service to the other so that they are not handled back-to-back. Hand hygiene and wiping between services is strongly recommended if there is more than one Sunday service.*

#### **What about baptisms?**

*With Easter coming, you may increase your number of baptisms. Yet, the guidelines for oil, water and font protocols remain in place. You also want to avoid several families gathering at the font. Consider spreading out baptisms over multiple Sundays.*

### ***Can we use small, individual cups for the wine?***

*We do not suggest using individual cups for wine at this time.*

### ***Holy Week Suggestions***

*The following are not necessarily mandatory, but rather some ideas and suggestions for Holy Week and Easter. With the health and safety of your congregation in mind, you are free to think and act creatively as we move through this holy season. Remember that palms, foot washing, and the veneration of the cross are all optional in our Holy Week liturgies. So, this is the year to err on the side of simplicity and safety.*

#### **Palm Sunday**

Place palms with bulletins in the pews or spread them out on a table for parishioners to pick up. We suggest that you don't congregate outside for the Liturgy of the Palms. It is hard to maintain distancing as you enter the church from an outside procession. However, consider including more people (especially children) in the procession (in the church), carrying palms. Palms can also be placed in small bags and delivered to those who are homebound.

#### **Maundy Thursday**

Congregational foot washing is not advisable. Servant leadership can be highlighted in the liturgy. Some congregations are using the time to encourage parishioners to engage in act of service (brining food items, reaching out to those in need/homebound).

Stripping of the altar is allowed. Just be aware of distancing/hand hygiene.

#### **Good Friday**

Veneration of the Cross should not include touching or kissing the cross. Remember to maintain distancing for the Stations of the Cross.

#### **Holy Saturday/Vigil**

If it is your custom, the Vigil is a good way to both maintain distance (use sign ups) and allow for quiet prayer time.

#### **Easter**

Easter Egg hunts are challenging to coordinate to maintain distance. Ideas that were suggested are scavenger hunts, delivering baskets to parishioners with prayer cards and eggs and having pick up packets for kids with treats /eggs after church.

Baptisms can be spread out over the Easter season to accommodate those who have not been baptized during the pandemic.