

Diocese of Des Moines
Sacramental Guidelines during COVID-19
Updated July 2, 2021

CHRISTIAN INTIATION OF ADULTS

The Elect

Realizing the strong desire of the Elect to receive the Easter Sacraments after this prolonged period of Election, parishes may reasonably begin to make preparation for the celebration of the Easter Sacraments.

In consultation with the RCIA team, the pastor should first consider whether the parish is in a position to initiate all the elect at once, or whether they will need to be divided into groups. This may be necessary to allow a representation of the faithful to attend the initiation ceremony and so represent the community which receives the newly initiated.

Bishop Joensen has dispensed with 2 of the scrutinizes in accord with #20 of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*. Pastors should make plans to celebrate 1 of the scrutinies (they may freely select one) with the RCIA team. This may be done either in a simple daily Mass or in a liturgy of the word outside of Mass with the Elect, their sponsor, and representatives of the RCIA team. The oral presentation of the Creed and Lord's Prayer may also be done at this celebration.

The initiation of the Elect should be done with as much of a representation of the community as allowed. The pastor may consider doing this at a regularly scheduled daily Mass (if the parish is in phase one) or at a specially arranged Mass with the Elect, their sponsor, members of the RCIA team, and family members invited (in accordance with the numbers allowed for the parish's celebration of daily Mass, and the current phase of weekday versus weekend Mass).

As we were able to celebrate the Rite of Election as a Diocese, the Abbreviated Version of Initiation should not be used. Pastors should instead follow the usual Rite beginning with number 218 of RCIA.

Permission is given for the Elect to receive Holy Communion under both species if they can be provided with their own chalice for communion.

(See below for notes on Baptism and Confirmation)

Those preparing for reception into full communion

As with the Elect, pastors may begin to receive candidates for full communion into the Church. They should endeavor to make provisions for a representative attendance of as many from the community as possible, with special consideration given to the RCIA team and any family of the candidates. "Private" celebrations with only a handful of people are less than ideal as they sacraments naturally have a community aspect to them.

Pastors may choose to receive and confirm candidates at any regularly scheduled daily Mass in their parish, or a special Mass on any day scheduled –as permitted by the parish’s current phase– with the candidate, the RCIA team, sponsors, and family. It may be necessary to do several such celebrations. Pastors should observe the current head count limits are for their parishes when scheduling and inviting people to these celebrations.

Permission is given for the candidates to receive Holy Communion under both species if they can be provided with their own chalice for communion.

Infant Baptisms

As parishes enter phase one, pastors may begin to schedule baptisms with families.

These may be celebrated any day of the week, during weekday Mass or outside of Masses on a weekend (during phase one). Face coverings are optional for all unvaccinated in attendance. The anointing with Chrism may be done either by pouring the oil on the crown of the head, or as usual with the thumb. Gloves should not be used. As much as possible, the celebrant should minimize touching the child.

Confirmations

As parishes commence phase one, pastors may begin to consider scheduling the celebration of confirmations. These may need to be done in smaller groups, at different daily Masses. As mentioned above, the principal of community celebration should be considered whenever possible. Regarding the anointing, in a letter dated June 2, the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments wrote, “The use by the minister of an instrument (gloves, cotton swab, etc...) does not affect the validity of the Sacrament.” Additionally the sponsor may place their hand on the clothed shoulder of the candidate, or they may simply extend their hand towards the candidate. This gesture has no bearing on the validity of the sacrament.

First Communions

Pastors may continue to celebrate First Communions. These may be done at regularly scheduled weekday Masses, or by specially scheduled Masses on any day as permitted in the parish’s current phase. It is likely that in order to maintain social distancing, first communion may have to be scheduled in smaller groups and not as an entire class. Permission is given for the first communicants to receive communion under both species if they can be provided with their own chalice for communion.

Weddings

Weddings may take place in accord with the guidelines of the phase which the parish finds itself in. Attendance will naturally be limited by the capacity of the Church, which may be limited due to social distancing.

Funerals

Pastors should work with their local funeral director to make sure they are apprised of parish guidelines. Presently, when a parish enters phase one, they may begin to celebrate funerals with

the same restrictions on daily Masses as found in the phase one guidelines. Pastors may wish to consider celebrating ‘family only’ funerals when there are family members traveling to the funeral from outside the community in order to mitigate the chances of intercommunity spread. All unvaccinated guests are strongly encouraged to wear masks. Parishes may consider establishing ‘seating zones’ separating family from local guests. Family units should to be seated 6 feet apart, following the parish’s social distancing seating plan when appropriate. Due to the risk of cross contamination, any sharing/eulogy should be done at from a place other than the ambo. Pastors are encouraged to be upfront with families about the limitations early in the planning process. If a parish presently in phase one is forced to ‘pull back’ from the celebration of daily Mass, the pastor may proceed with an already planned funeral with only family in attendance and strict social distancing observed.