

Guidelines for Sacraments and Pastoral Care

*Working Group on Infectious Disease Guidelines for Sacraments & Pastoral Care*¹

June 11, 2020

Baptism

I. Sacramental and Liturgical Requirements

In order for a baptism to be valid, the minister of the sacrament must pour true water over the head of the recipient. An instrument may be used, as long as water touches the skin and flows over the head of the recipient as the minister pronounces the Trinitarian formula (“I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”). The same person who pours the water must say the words; otherwise, there is no valid sacrament.

Special considerations for baptisms performed in danger of death

In cases of necessity (danger of death), any person -- even a non-believer -- may validly administer baptism by pouring water over the head of the recipient while saying the proper formula, as long as that person intends to do what the Church does in baptism. If death is imminent, the minister should pour natural water (even if not blessed) on the head while saying the sacramental formula, omitting everything else. If death is not imminent, the minister should observe the prescribed sacramental rite where possible. (*Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, no. 373).

¹ Dr. Timothy P. Flanagan, M.D. (*Prof. of Medicine (infectious diseases), Alpert Medical School of Brown University*); Dr. Paul Cieslak, M.D. (*Infectious Diseases & Public Health, Catholic Medical Association member*); Dr. Thomas W. McGovern, M.D. (Catholic Medical Association National Board Member, Former Clinical Research Physician, U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases); Fr. Nicanor Austriaco, O.P. (*Prof. of Biology, Providence College*); Fr. Dominic Legge, O.P. (*Assist. Prof. of Theology, Director of the Thomistic Institute, Dominican House of Studies*); Fr. Dominic Langevin, O.P. (*Assistant Professor, Editor of The Thomist, Dominican House of Studies*); Fr. Paul Scalia (*Vicar for Clergy, Diocese of Arlington*); Fr. Gregory Pine, O.P. (*Thomistic Institute*). We are grateful for the comments and review of Dr. Suzanne Strom, M.D. (*Associate Clinical Professor, University of California, Irvine*), Rev. Msgr. Robert J. Vitillo (*Attaché, Permanent Observer Mission of the Holy See to the UN in Geneva and Secretary General, International Catholic Migration Commission*), Dr. Thomas Cesario, M.D. (*Prof. of Medicine (infectious diseases), Univ. of Calif. Irvine School of Medicine*), Fr. Christopher Pollard (*Diocese of Arlington*); and Fr. John Baptist Ku, O.P. (*Assoc. Prof., Dominican House of Studies*).

Normally, if a priest baptizes someone in danger of death, he should also confirm the candidate. A newly-baptized person who has reached the age of reason should be given Holy Communion as well, if possible.

Where feasible, the person should be afforded a godfather and a godmother, although this is not strictly necessary. Neither parent may serve as a godparent. Godparents need not be physically present: two persons already available may stand in proxy for the absent godparents and make the liturgical responses on their behalf. Godparents must be Catholic.

II. Conferring Baptism during the Coronavirus Pandemic

A. Current CDC/WHO Guidance Applicable to Baptism

Latest information on how COVID-19 spreads:

According to [the latest information from the CDC](#) (May 21, 2020):

- “The virus that causes COVID-19 is thought to spread mainly from person to person, mainly through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs. Spread is more likely when people are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet).”
- “It may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object, like a packaging container, that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.”
- “There is no evidence showing anyone has gotten COVID-19 through drinking water, recreational water, or wastewater. **The risk of COVID-19 transmission through water is expected to be low.**” ([CDC "Healthy Water" guidance](#); cf. [WHO technical guidance on Water and COVID-19.](#))

Definitions:

- “Close contact” with a COVID-19 case is defined by the CDC as contact with a person who is COVID+ for a prolonged period of time (typically 15 minutes or more) or direct infectious exposure (via respiratory droplets) with someone who is COVID+. ([CDC Risk Assessment](#))

- When these guidelines call for the use of a face covering or mask, a homemade face covering or a standard surgical mask (with elastic ear loops) is sufficient. N95 respirators are not recommended, except in the case of certain medical procedures.
- A complete set of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) required for contact with a COVID+ patient includes gloves, respirators or medical masks, goggles or a face shield, and gowns. We presume complete PPE will only be used in a hospital setting as it requires training in proper use, management, and disposal.
- In all cases, we assume that the minister administering the sacraments shows no signs of illness and has not been in close contact with anyone COVID+ unless he was wearing appropriate and complete PPE.

General precautions recommended at all times

- State and local health authorities will prescribe limits on the number of people gathering at a time.
- Anyone who is feeling sick should stay at home.
- Modify all gatherings to incorporate physical distancing measures (keeping 6 feet distance away from each other).
- Do not engage in physical contact (e.g., hugging, handshaking).
- Proper hand hygiene: wash hands or use alcohol-based gels.
- Avoid touching your face, nose, and eyes.

B. Specific Recommendations for Performing Baptisms

1. Baptism of One Child in a Church:

- During this time, a minister with a respiratory infection of any kind should avoid administering sacraments, including baptism.
- Limits set by state and local health authorities on the size of gatherings may require that attendance be limited (for example: parents, godparents, and a few guests).
- The minister should place a small amount of the oil of catechumens in its own vessel, and a small amount of sacred chrism in a second vessel. After the

ceremony, any leftover oil will be disposed of reverently (not returned to the oil stock), and the vessels will be thoroughly washed with soap and water.

- Wherever possible, the priest should maintain a 6-foot distance from parents, godparents, and others, except for the brief moments when the rite requires close proximity.
- Members of a single household do not need to practice physical distancing from each other and so may sit or stand together. (For example, if a group arrived in a single private vehicle, they could sit together.) Those who are not members of the same household, however, should maintain physical distancing as much as possible during the rite, except for the brief moments of proximity required by the rite.
- **Masks/Face Coverings:**
 - If attendance at the baptismal ceremony is limited to members of the same household (plus godparents), it is effectively a small non-public gathering. In that case, we recommend that the priest take care to observe a 6-foot physical distance except for the brief moments needed to anoint and baptize. Under such circumstances, the baptismal rite may be performed without masks or face coverings.
 - If the baptismal ceremony has a wider attendance, the attendees should follow the requirements of public health authorities regarding the wearing of face coverings or masks. Given the sacramental role of the priest in conferring baptism, we recommend that the priest perform the baptismal rite without a mask.
 - Cloth face coverings should not be placed on young children under age 2, anyone who has trouble breathing, or anyone otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance. (See [CDC recommendations on face coverings](#).)
- The minister, the parents, and the godparents should perform hand hygiene (handwashing or use of alcohol-based hand sanitizer) immediately before the beginning of the ceremony. Thereafter, they should take care to avoid touching their faces.
- The minister should not wear gloves. If the minister performs hand hygiene with an alcohol-based gel or by handwashing with soap and water at the points

indicated below, there is no significant risk of viral transmission. Good hand hygiene is reliably effective against the virus.

Specific Elements of the Rite:

- ***Tracing the Sign of the Cross on the Forehead:*** This may be done as normal. If hand hygiene is done at the beginning and end of the ceremony, there is not a significant risk of transmission.
- ***Anointing with Oil of Catechumens:*** The minister dips his thumb one time in the small quantity of the oil of catechumens he prepared in a small vessel before the start of the baptism. He then anoints the child on the breast. (After the ceremony, he should reverently dispose of any remaining oil and wash the vessel with soap and water.)
- ***The Baptism itself:*** According to the CDC, “[t]here is no evidence showing anyone has gotten COVID-19 through drinking water, recreational water, or wastewater. The risk of COVID-19 transmission through water is expected to be low.” ([CDC "Healthy Water" guidance](#); cf. [WHO technical guidance on Water and COVID-19](#).) Still, out of an abundance of caution, it is prudent to avoid reusing baptismal water for multiple children.
 - Therefore, before the baptism, empty the font and refill it with fresh water (to be blessed during the ceremony). After the ceremony, ensure that the baptismal water is drained or emptied out of the font.
- ***Anointing with Sacred Chrism:*** The minister dips his thumb one time in the small quantity of the sacred chrism he prepared in a small vessel before the start of the baptism. He then anoints the child on the crown of the head in the normal way. (After the ceremony, he should reverently dispose of any remaining chrism and wash the vessel with soap and water.)
- ***Baptismal Candle and White Garment:*** Provided that proper hand hygiene is performed at the places described above, handing over these items does not pose a significant risk of viral spread.
- ***Ephphetha Prayer:*** Insofar as the ephphetha prayer envisions the minister touching the mouth and ears of the recipient, it entails a higher risk. The rite already permits that this prayer be omitted, and we recommend that the minister do so.

2. Baptism of Multiple Children in a Single Ceremony in a Church:

The baptism of multiple children (belonging to different households) in a single ceremony is a matter of greater concern from the perspective of public health, due both to the larger size of the gathering, and the serial contact between the priest and the children being baptized. We encourage ministers to consider performing individual baptisms insofar as circumstances permit, rather than baptizing multiple children in a single ceremony.

- During this time, a minister with a respiratory infection of any kind should avoid administering sacraments, including baptism.
- Limits set by state and local health authorities on the size of gatherings may require that attendance be limited (for example: parents, godparents, and a few guests).
- The minister should place a small amount of the oil of catechumens in its own vessel, and a small amount of sacred chrism in a second vessel. After the ceremony, any leftover oil will be disposed of reverently (not returned to the oil stock), and the vessels will be thoroughly washed with soap and water.
- Wherever possible, the priest should maintain a 6-foot distance from parents, godparents, and others, except for the brief moments when the rite requires close proximity.
- Members of a single household do not need to practice physical distancing from each other and so may sit or stand together. (For example, if a group arrived in a single private vehicle, they could sit together.) Those who are not members of the same household, however, should maintain physical distancing as much as possible during the rite, except for the brief moments of proximity required by the rite.
- **Masks/Face Coverings:**
 - For multiple-child baptisms, the attendees should follow the requirements of public health authorities regarding the wearing of face coverings or masks. Given the sacramental role of the priest in conferring baptism, we recommend that the priest perform the baptismal rite without a mask.
 - Cloth face coverings should not be placed on young children under age 2, anyone who has trouble breathing, or anyone otherwise unable to remove

the mask without assistance. (See [CDC recommendations on face coverings](#).)

- The minister, the parents, and the godparents should perform hand hygiene (handwashing or use of alcohol-based hand sanitizer) immediately before the beginning of the ceremony, and at its conclusion. In the meantime, they should take care to avoid touching their faces.
- The minister should not wear gloves. If the minister diligently performs hand hygiene with an alcohol-based gel or by handwashing with soap and water, there is no significant risk of viral transmission. Good hand hygiene is reliably effective against the virus.

Specific Elements of the Rite:

- ***Tracing the Sign of the Cross on the Forehead:*** This may be done as normal. If hand hygiene is done at the beginning and end of the ceremony, there is not a significant risk of infection, even if the minister touches multiple children on the forehead in a row.
- ***Anointing with Oil of Catechumens:*** The minister dips his thumb one time in the small quantity of the oil of catechumens he prepared in a small vessel before the start of the baptism. He then anoints each child on the breast. He may dip his thumb in the oil before each child. It is not necessary to perform hand hygiene between children. [Evidence suggests](#) that the olive oil used in the sacraments is not a friendly environment for the virus. (After the ceremony, he should reverently dispose of any remaining oil and wash the vessel with soap and water.)
- ***The Baptism itself:*** According to the CDC, “[t]here is no evidence showing anyone has gotten COVID-19 through drinking water, recreational water, or wastewater. The risk of COVID-19 transmission through water is expected to be low.” ([CDC "Healthy Water" guidance](#); cf. [WHO technical guidance on Water and COVID-19](#).) Still, out of an abundance of caution, it is prudent to avoid reusing baptismal water for multiple children.
 - For example, the minister could bless water in a separate vessel (like a bowl or pitcher), and draw from that vessel as he baptizes each child, pouring the water over the head of each and into the font, without redrawing water from the font. The water in the font would be drained or emptied at the conclusion of the ceremony.

- Multiple baptisms by immersion are not recommended during this period.
- ***Anointing with Sacred Chrism:*** The minister dips his thumb one time in the small quantity of the sacred chrism he prepared in a small vessel before the start of the baptism. He then anoints each child on the crown of the head in the normal way. It is not necessary to perform hand hygiene between children. [Evidence suggests](#) that the olive oil used in the sacraments is not a friendly environment for the virus. (After the ceremony, he should reverently dispose of any remaining chrism and wash the vessel with soap and water.)
- ***Baptismal Candle and White Garment:*** Provided that proper hand hygiene is performed before and after the baptismal rite as a whole, handing over these items does not pose a significant risk of viral spread.
- ***Ephphetha Prayer:*** Insofar as the ephphetha prayer envisions the minister touching the mouth and ears of the recipient, it entails a higher risk. The rite already permits that this prayer be omitted, and we recommend that the minister do so.

3. Baptism and Confirmation of Healthy Adults or Children of Catechetical Age in a Church.

We assume that an adult has been adequately prepared for baptism according to the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. The Rite presupposes that a bishop or priest baptizing an adult or a child of catechetical age will immediately go on to administer the sacrament of Confirmation (presuming that he has the faculty to confirm; see Code of Canon Law, can. 883), and that the person will then receive Holy Communion. In what follows, we provide guidelines for conferring baptism and confirmation. For Holy Communion, we recommend following the relevant sections of this Working Group's recommendations for the celebration of public Masses.

- During this time, a priest or other minister with a respiratory infection of any kind should avoid administering sacraments, including baptism.
- Limits set by state and local health authorities on the size of gatherings may require that attendance be limited (for example: godparents and family, perhaps a few guests).
 - If multiple persons are baptized and confirmed in the same ceremony, there may need to be more stringent restrictions on guests for this reason.

- Before the ceremony, the minister should place a small amount of sacred chrism in a small vessel. After the ceremony, any leftover chrism will be disposed of reverently (not returned to the oil stock), and the vessel will be thoroughly washed with soap and water.
- Wherever possible, the minister should maintain a 6-foot distance from the candidate(s), godparents, and others, except for the brief moments when the rite requires close proximity.
- Members of a single household do not need to practice physical distancing from each other and so may sit or stand together. (For example, if a group arrived in a single private vehicle, they could sit together.) Those who are not members of the same household, however, should maintain physical distancing as much as possible during the rite, except for the brief moments of proximity required by the rite.
- **Masks/Face Coverings:**
 - If only members of a single household are being baptized and confirmed, and if attendance is limited to members of the same household (plus godparents), it is effectively a small non-public gathering. In that case, we recommend that the minister take care to observe a 6-foot physical distance except for the brief moments needed to baptize and to confirm. Under such circumstances, the rite may be performed without masks or face coverings.
 - If the ceremony includes multiple candidates (not belonging to the same household) or has a wider attendance, the attendees should follow the requirements of public health authorities regarding the wearing of face coverings or masks. Given the sacred role of the minister in this sacramental rite, we recommend that the minister conduct the rite without wearing a mask.
 - Cloth face coverings should not be placed on young children under age 2, anyone who has trouble breathing, or anyone otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance. (See [CDC recommendations on face coverings](#).)
- The minister, the candidate, and the godparents should perform hand hygiene (handwashing or use of alcohol-based hand sanitizer) immediately before the beginning of the ceremony, and again at its conclusion. In the meantime, they should take care to avoid touching their faces.

Specific Elements of the Rite:

- ***The Baptism itself:*** According to the CDC, “[t]here is no evidence showing anyone has gotten COVID-19 through drinking water, recreational water, or wastewater. The risk of COVID-19 transmission through water is expected to be low.” ([CDC "Healthy Water" guidance](#); cf. [WHO technical guidance on Water and COVID-19](#).) Still, out of an abundance of caution, it is prudent to avoid reusing baptismal water for multiple candidates.
 - For the baptism of a single person: before the baptism, empty the font and refill it with fresh water (to be blessed during the ceremony). After the ceremony, ensure that the baptismal water is drained or emptied out of the font.
 - For the baptism of multiple candidates in one ceremony: the minister could bless water in a separate vessel (like a bowl or pitcher), and draw from that vessel as he baptizes each person, pouring the water over the head of each and into the font, without redrawing water from the font. The water in the font would be drained or emptied at the conclusion of the ceremony.
 - Multiple baptisms by immersion are not recommended during this period.
- ***Baptismal Candle and White Garment:*** Provided that proper hand hygiene is performed before and after the ceremony as a whole, handing over these items does not pose a significant risk of viral spread.
- ***Confirmation (if the minister is a bishop or priest):***²
 - ***Laying on of Hands:*** The minister extends his hands over the candidate (or over the group of candidates), without physically touching the head.
 - ***Sacramental Anointing with Chrism:*** The minister dips his thumb in a small vessel of sacred chrism and then confers the sacrament in the normal way, using his bare right hand and thumb, while reciting the sacramental

² *If the minister is neither a bishop nor a priest*, then confirmation is not conferred immediately after the baptism. In that case, the minister anoints with sacred chrism as normal, and then performs hand hygiene in the customary way. (This may be done in the traditional manner, washing one’s hands in a basin. Soap and water should be used.) In the case of multiple baptisms, the post-baptismal anointings with chrism may be done in succession without hand hygiene in between, because touching the head does not pose a significant risk for the spread of contagion. For more detailed guidelines for conferring the sacrament of Confirmation, see this Working Group’s document on Confirmation.

formula.³ When the minister says, “Peace be with you,” to the candidate, the rite does not call for any additional gesture or handshake of peace, and we recommend against it during this time.

- If there are multiple candidates, it is not necessary to perform hand hygiene in between each candidate, since there is not a significant risk of viral transmission from touching the forehead.
- After confirming all of the candidates, the minister should wash his hands in a basin in the traditional manner, using soap and water.
- After the ceremony, the small vessel used to hold the chrism should be purified and washed.

4. Baptism and Confirmation of an Adult (or Child of Catechetical Age) Who is Unable to Come to Church

If a person desiring baptism is unable to come to church (e.g., because the person is at-risk or is confined to a nursing home), but is otherwise not in danger of death, we recommend delaying baptism and confirmation until the person can come to church and receive these sacraments in a private ceremony.

If delay would involve a hardship for the person, or if the person is in danger of death from a non-COVID-related condition,⁴ the guidelines listed above may be adapted for use in a home environment, with the following additions:

- The minister and the candidate should wear face coverings or masks. (Cloth face coverings should not be placed on young children under age 2, anyone who has trouble breathing, or anyone otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance. (See [CDC recommendations on face coverings](#).)
- The minister should remain at least 6 feet from the candidate, except when required by the rite to be nearer.

³ Some have asked whether an instrument might be used to anoint during Confirmation, as is possible in the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick. From the medical side, there is no need to use an instrument: there is no significant risk of viral transmission from an anointing of the forehead with the minister’s bare hand and thumb.

⁴ If the person has been in close contact with a COVID+ case, or is suspected of being COVID+, and is in a high-risk group, there may be reason to regard the person as in danger of death. For guidance on this situation, see below.

- NB: The minister should not wear gloves. If the minister performs hand hygiene with an alcohol-based gel or by handwashing with soap and water at the points indicated above, there is no significant risk of viral transmission. Good hand hygiene is reliably effective against the virus.

5. **Baptism of an Adult or Child of Catechetical Age in Danger of Death Due to COVID-19**

If an adult or a child of catechetical age seeks baptism and is in danger of death,⁵ every effort should be made to confer baptism. If a patient is suspected or confirmed COVID+, **we recommend that baptism alone be conferred**, and that confirmation be delayed. The post-baptismal anointing with sacred chrism should likewise be omitted. This will minimize contact with the patient while still providing the saving grace of baptism.

a. **Preparing for the Baptismal Rite**

If the person is hospitalized:

- *If properly equipped with PPE* (as guided by hospital personnel and protocols), a priest may enter the patient’s room, may stand or sit at the patient’s bedside, and may touch the patient as appropriate during the baptismal rite, as detailed below.
- *If the minister is not allowed into the room (for example, due to a shortage of PPE), and the patient is in danger of death*, anyone may baptize the patient, provided he pours water on the head (touching the skin) while saying the baptismal formula, and intends what the Church intends. In this event, the priest should instruct someone able to enter the room (e.g., a nurse or doctor) on how to administer the sacrament, using the rite in Appendix A.
 - Before entering the patient’s room, holy water should be prepared in a disposable cup or bottle (regular water suffices if blessed water is not available), and the person who will confer baptism should have a printout of Appendix A at the ready. The disposable

⁵ “Danger of death” means a condition where it is reasonably possible that the person could die. Most (perhaps all) COVID+ persons who are intubated or are in an ICU are in danger of death as the Church understands that category. The Church provides for more urgent cases as follows: “In the case of a person who is at the point of death, that is, whose death is imminent, and time is short, the minister, omitting everything else, pours natural water (even if not blessed) on the head of the sick person, while saying the usual sacramental form.” Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, no. 373.

cup/bottle and the printout will be left behind in the patient's room. A ritual book (like the RCIA ritual book or the *Pastoral Care of the Sick* ritual book) should **not** be brought into the room.

If the person is in a nursing home, another institution, or a private residence:

We presume that hospital-level PPE will not be available. Hospital-level PPE is not recommended in homes/outside of the hospital as proper use of PPE requires training and appropriate methods of disposal (per [CDC](#) and [WHO](#) guidance). Given the importance of baptism as the sacrament of salvation, however, there would be a grave reason for a priest or deacon to enter a dying COVID+ patient's room in order to baptize. If he does so, we recommend the following:

- Before going to a nursing home, institution, or private residence, the priest should prepare the following items:
 - A small “sick call” stole.
 - A bottle of holy water.
 - A disposable cup (like a plastic cup).
 - A printout of the rite of Christian Initiation for a Person in Danger of Death (see Appendix A, below). The priest should **not** bring the RCIA ritual book or the *Pastoral Care of the Sick* ritual book into the home. He will leave behind the printed pages of the rite in the patient's room when he departs.
 - Hand sanitizer, gloves, and a surgical mask (if available). An N95 respirator is not necessary (see [Technical Guidance](#) from the WHO).
- **Before entering the home or room of the patient**, the priest should perform hand hygiene (washing hands for 20 seconds with soap and water, or using an alcohol-based gel). He should then don gloves and a mask or face covering, and place his short “sick call” confessional stole around his neck.
- If possible, the patient should also wear a face covering or mask.
 - *Exception:* A patient who is having trouble breathing or who is unconscious should not wear a face covering or mask. (See [CDC guidance on face coverings and masks](#).)

- The priest should not bring anything into the residence with him except what is absolutely necessary. For example, a priest may not bring a ritual book, a mobile phone, a holy card, or any other item. He may not reach into his pockets for any item whatsoever. He may not bring anything whatsoever out of the residence, except as provided below.
- The priest should avoid touching surfaces in the residence as much as possible, and should avoid all contact between his clothing and the items in the residence as much as possible. He should take care not to touch his eyes, nose, or mouth.
- *Physical distancing:* The priest should limit the number of people he comes into contact with during his visit, always respecting the CDC-recommended distance of 6 feet.

b. Godparents

Where time and circumstances permit, one would normally arrange for a godparent (or godparents) to be present and to participate in the rite. This may not be possible for a COVID+ patient. The minister should exercise appropriate pastoral prudence in assessing the situation and determining whether to go forward without the presence of a godparent. In the absence of a godparent, the portions of the rite that call for a godparent's response or action should be omitted.

NB: A godparent who cannot be present for the rite may designate a proxy to make the liturgical responses on his or her behalf. Normally, this proxy should also be a practicing Catholic.

c. Conferring Baptism

- Having donned the available PPE, the minister enters the room carrying holy water in a disposable cup and a printout of the rite (Appendix A). He will leave the cup and the printout in the room when he departs.
- The minister should remain 6 feet from the patient until the moment of baptism itself.
- For the baptism itself, the minister should take care to pour water over the head while saying the sacramental formula. The water should flow in a true washing. A

large quantity of water is not necessary, but it must be more than a sprinkling of water.

- The post-baptismal anointing with chrism should be omitted. Likewise, the sacrament of confirmation should be delayed.
- Normally, viaticum would be administered as a part of the rite. The Church has consistently and emphatically called for viaticum to be the final sacrament received by a dying person, and the minister is encouraged to do his utmost in order that the newly baptized receive viaticum as soon as possible. Due to the necessary safeguards surrounding a COVID+ patient, especially in a hospital or institutional setting, however, it is doubtful that viaticum could be provided in the same rite as baptism.⁶ As a result, we recommend that viaticum be omitted, and that viaticum be brought to the newly baptized as soon as practicable after the baptism.
- After exiting the patient's room, the minister should remove all PPE and perform hand hygiene.

⁶ In general, a minister may not bring anything whatsoever out of a COVID+ patient's room, which means that he may not bring a pyx with him into the room when he baptizes. Thus, in order to provide viaticum in the same rite as baptism, he would be obliged to (a) leave a pyx with the Eucharist in a safe location outside the patient's room, in an area that has been disinfected; (b) perform hand hygiene and don PPE (mask and gloves, and if available, eye protection and gown), (c) enter the patient's room carrying holy water and Appendix A, (d) perform the baptism itself, (e) exit the room, taking nothing with him, (f) doff PPE and perform hand hygiene, (g) don a fresh set of PPE, (h) take a host from the pyx, leaving the pyx in its location, (i) return to the patient's room and administer Holy Communion as viaticum, (j) exit the room, doff PPE, and perform hand hygiene, and (k) retrieve the pyx.

Appendix A

RITE FOR CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF A PERSON IN DANGER OF DEATH

INTRODUCTION

Dear brother/sister, you have asked to be baptized because you wish to have eternal life. This is eternal life: to know the one, true God and Jesus Christ, whom he has sent. This is the faith of Christians. Do you acknowledge this?

R/. I do.

As well as professing your faith in Jesus Christ, you must also be willing to follow his commands, as Christians do. Are you willing to accept this?

R/. I am.

Are you prepared to live as Christians do?

R/. I am.

Promise, therefore, that once you have recovered your strength, you will try to know Christ better and follow a course of Christian formation. Do you so promise?

R/. I do.

[To Godparents (**omit if not present**)

You have heard N.'s promise. As his/her godparent do you promise to remind him/her of it and to help him/her to learn the teaching of Christ, to take part in the life of our community, and to bear witness as a true Christian?

R/. I do.

And will the rest of you, who have witnessed this promise, assist him/her in fulfilling it?

R/. We will.]

Then the minister turns to the sick person and says:

Therefore you will now be baptized into eternal life, in accordance with the command of our Lord Jesus Christ.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

Gospel Reading

Options: Jn 3:1-6, Jn 6:44-47, Mt 22:35-40, Mt 28:18-20, Mk 1:9-11. The first of these is printed here.

+ A reading from the holy Gospel according to John

There was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. He came to Jesus at night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God, for no one can do these signs that you are doing unless God is with him." Jesus answered and said to him, "Amen, amen, I say to you, unless one is born from above, he cannot see the Kingdom of God." Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man once grown old be born again? Surely he cannot reenter his mother's womb and be born again, can he?" Jesus answered, "Amen, amen, I say to you, unless one is born of water and Spirit he cannot enter the Kingdom of God. What is born of flesh is flesh and what is born of spirit is spirit."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Intercessions for the Candidate

The minister may adapt or shorten the intercessions according to the condition of the sick person. The intercessions may be omitted if the sick person appears to be tiring.

Let us pray to the God of mercy for our sick brother/sister who has asked for the gift of baptism; let us pray for his/her godparent and for all his/her family and friends.

Father, increase his/her faith in Christ, your Son and our Savior; in faith we make our prayer:

R/. Lord, hear us.

Grant his/her desire to have life eternal and enter the kingdom of heaven; in faith we make our prayer:

R/. Lord, hear us.

Fulfill his/her hope of knowing you, the Creator of the world and the Father of all; in faith we make our prayer:

R/. Lord, hear us.

Through baptism forgive his/her sins and make him/her holy; in faith we make our prayer:

R/. Lord, hear us.

Grant him/her the salvation that Christ won by his death and resurrection; in faith we make our prayer:

R/. Lord, hear us.

In your love, adopt him/her into your family; in faith we make our prayer:

R/. Lord, hear us.

[Restore him/her to health so that he/she may have the time to know and imitate Christ more perfectly; in faith we make our prayer:

R/. Lord, hear us.]

Keep united in faith and love all who have been baptized into the one Body of Christ; in faith we make our prayer:

R/. Lord, hear us.

Prayer over the Candidate

Father, look kindly upon the faith and longing of your servant **N.**; through this water by which you have chosen to give us birth from above, join him/her to Christ's death and resurrection.

Forgive all his/her sins, adopt him/her as your own, and count him/her among your holy people. [Grant also that he/she may be restored to health, to render you thanks in your Church and grow in faithfulness to the teaching of Christ.] We ask this through Christ our Lord.

R/. Amen.

CELEBRATION OF BAPTISM

Renunciation of Sin

Do you reject Satan, and all his works, and all his empty promises?

R/. I do.

Profession of Faith

N., do you believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth?

R/. I do.

Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was born of the Virgin Mary, was crucified, died, and was buried, rose from the dead, and is now seated at the right hand of the Father?

R/. I do.

Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting?

R/. I do.

Baptism

The minister, using the name the sick person desires to have, baptizes him or her, saying:

N., I baptize you in the name of the Father,

The minister pours water the first time.

and of the Son,

The minister pours water the second time.

and of the Holy Spirit.

The minister pours water the third time.

Concluding Rites

N., God our Father has freed you from your sins, has given you a new birth and made you his son/daughter in Christ. Soon, God willing, you will receive the fullness of the Holy Spirit through confirmation and will approach the altar of God to share the food of life at the table of his sacrifice. In the spirit of that adoption which you have received today, join us now in praying as our Lord himself taught us.

Our Father . . .

Blessing

A minister who is a priest says:

May the Lord be with you to protect you. **R/.**

Amen.

May the Lord guide you and give you strength.

R/. Amen.

May the Lord watch over you, keep you in his care, and bless you with his peace. **R/.** Amen.

May almighty God bless you, the Father, and the Son, + and the Holy Spirit. **R/.** Amen.

[A lay minister signs himself or herself with the sign of the cross, saying:

May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life. **R/.** Amen.]