

Guidelines on Sacraments and Pastoral Care

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

The Sacrament of Confirmation

June 14, 2020

A. General Principles

The sacramental rite of Confirmation links the biblical and traditional gestures of anointing and laying on of hands in a combined gesture. This signifies and confers a participation in the priestly, prophetic, and kingly roles of Christ, such that the Confirmation candidate is anointed with the same Holy Spirit who was received by Christ. Confirmation's episcopal or priestly minister, acting *in persona Christi*, passes onto the recipient a share in the same Holy Spirit that the minister himself has received.

Pope St. Paul VI defined the sacrament as follows: "The Sacrament of Confirmation is conferred through the anointing with Chrism on the forehead, which is done by the laying on of the hand, and through the words: 'Be sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit.'"² Traditionally the minister would put his hand (or fingers) on the head of the candidate while anointing the forehead with the thumb. The Holy See later stated that, at the least, an anointing with the thumb of the minister manifests the laying on of the hand sufficient for the valid conferral of the sacrament.³

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² Apostolic constitution *Divinae Consortium Naturae* (1971). See also *Code of Canon Law*, can. 880.

³ Pontifical Commission for the Interpretation of the Decrees of the Second Vatican Council, June 9, 1972, in *AAS* 64 [1972] 526; *DOL* 2529; *CLD* 7:611. Confirmation ministers "lay hands" on candidates twice during the rite: first, without touching the candidates' heads but simply by extending their hands over them (no. 25 of the rite of Confirmation), and second, through the physical contact of one hand in conjunction with the anointing (no. 27). This second laying on of hands (while saying the required sacramental formula) is essential for conferring the sacrament. In 1885, the Holy Office stated that an attempt to confirm with an instrument was of doubtful validity and should be redone without an instrument (P. Gasparri and J. Serédi, eds., *Codicis Iuris Canonici Fontes* [Rome: 1923–39], vol. 4, no. 1090; *Collectanea S. Congregationis de Propaganda Fide seu Decreta Instructiones Rescripta pro Apostolicis Missionibus* [Rome: 1907], vol. 2, no. 1630). More recently, the Congregation for Divine Worship has communicated in response to a *dubium* from the USCCB that "the use by a minister of an instrument (gloves, cotton swab. . .) does not affect the validity of the Sacrament."

Some have asked whether an instrument might be used to confer the sacrament. [As we note below](#), however, we do not think there is a significant risk of viral transmission from a Confirmation anointing of the forehead done with a bare hand and thumb, and so do not think there would be a notable public health benefit to using gloves, a cotton swab, or other instrument, given the sacramental context and the level of risk.

Confirmation may be postponed until such time as it can be celebrated with its normal, due solemnity. Although one can be in the state of grace without this sacrament, Confirmation confers an important sacramental grace to strengthen the candidate in the Christian life. Therefore, it is reasonable for the Church's ministers to seek to confer the sacrament even during a time of pandemic if it is possible to do so without undue risk.

The ordinary minister of Confirmation is the bishop, and the Latin Church has traditionally insisted upon the ecclesial importance of the bishop's role in Confirmation. At the same time, in order to make the sacrament more easily available under present conditions and to limit the risk of exposure of any single minister, the diocesan bishop has the option of granting the faculty to confirm to other presbyters (*CIC*, can. 884).

The following guidelines are based on current guidance issued by the World Health Organization (WHO), the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and other public health authorities. They also integrate the requirements of the Catholic Church for the valid and licit celebration of Confirmation, in accord with Catholic teaching, liturgical law, and canon law. We have endeavored to formulate them with great care to preserve and respect the reverence due to the sacrament and the powerful symbolism of its rite.

We have divided these guidelines into phases, to correspond to the indications from the U.S. federal government on how public health authorities will step down the restrictions on public activity as we pass through different stages of the COVID response.

We intend this document to reflect the most current guidance from health authorities. We will update it as the official guidance changes (as we expect it will, as we pass through different phases of the outbreak and as we learn more about the virus).

Latest information on how COVID-19 spreads:

According to [the latest information from the CDC](#) (June 4, 2020), “[t]he virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person.

- Between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet).
- Through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks.

- These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs.
- COVID-19 may be spread by people who are not showing symptoms.”

The CDC adds: “It may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes. This is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads, but we are still learning more about how this virus spreads.”

B. Which Rite: Confirmation within Mass or without Mass?

The *Order of Confirmation* provides a rite for celebrating the sacrament within Mass and another without Mass. This Working Group document has been drafted with both rites in mind.

Ordinarily, there is a sacramental and pastoral fittingness to celebrating Confirmation within the context of Mass. During the COVID-19 pandemic, however, some dioceses or parishes may wish to offer Confirmation outside of Mass, in order to shorten the Confirmation ceremony, and to more easily allow for multiple Confirmation ceremonies (especially when the bishops and priests are already scheduled to celebrate other Masses for the faithful, for which there is a daily maximum limit established in canon law.)

C. Phase I: Public Ceremonies with Strict Limits on Public Gatherings and Strict Physical Distancing

In phase I, limits on the size of public gatherings remain in place. Health authorities also recommend frequent hand hygiene, vigilance in maintaining physical distancing, and the use of face coverings in public. Anyone feeling sick should stay home, and anyone who has been in close contact with a COVID+ individual should self-quarantine for 14 days.⁴

Physical distancing calls for avoiding “close contact” with those outside one’s household. “Close contact” generally means being within 6 feet of another person, especially if this will last for 15 minutes or more.

Certain necessary tasks (e.g., receiving medical care, purchasing food, visiting a pharmacy, working in an essential business) may require that one come closer than 6 feet to others for brief periods. Reception of the sacraments is important for the faithful in the midst of this pandemic,

⁴ “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, like being sneezed on) to someone who is COVID+. ([CDC on how COVID spreads](#))

and so the same guidelines apply: one should generally try to avoid being within 6 feet of others, but where necessary, a momentary interaction presents an acceptable risk, especially if other precautions are taken. Given how the virus is thought to spread (principally via respiratory droplets from sneezes and coughs), this risk is lower for brief encounters than in cases of prolonged contact.

1. General Provisions

- a. Discourage those who are at higher risk from COVID-19 (i.e., those who are older or who have underlying health conditions) from attending the Confirmation ceremony.
- b. Tell the faithful—including Confirmation candidates and their sponsors—that anyone with a cough of any sort and anyone feeling sick should not come to the Confirmation ceremony.
- c. Place hand sanitizer near the entrances to a church. Encourage those entering and exiting to perform hand hygiene.
 - i. The Confirmation candidates and their sponsors should be asked to perform hand hygiene when they enter and exit the church.
- d. The commonly-touched surfaces in the church should be cleaned before and after the Confirmation ceremony. (See [CDC recommendations on cleaning your facility.](#))
- e. A bishop or priest with a respiratory infection of any kind should avoid publically celebrating the sacraments during this phase. The same holds for other ministers who might serve at a sacramental ceremony (deacons, servers, lectors) as well as for sacristans and ushers.
- f. **Masks and face coverings:** If recommended by the relevant health authorities, the faithful should wear cloth face coverings when in public, including when they come to church. Surgical masks or N-95 respirators are not recommended. (See [CDC recommendations on face coverings.](#))
 - i. 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.](#))
 - ii. See below for special instructions concerning the rite of Confirmation.
- g. The principal celebrant and other ministers should not wear masks or gloves during the celebration of Mass or the conferral of Confirmation. Instead, they should remain more than 6 feet from the congregation during the entirety of the ceremony except for the conferral of Confirmation and

the distribution of Communion. In such circumstances, there is no substantial risk of infection.

- i. As is the Mass, the Rite of Confirmation is a solemn encounter with a bishop or priest, who is acting *in persona Christi* in this liturgy. As such, it is imbued with powerful sacramental and liturgical symbolism. For the minister of Confirmation to wear a mask and gloves would be a detrimental countersign in this context, and it is not warranted by considerations of hygiene if the minister remains a proper distance from the congregation. (An analogy: public health officials often do not wear masks during press conferences, given the nature of those public appearances and the distance between the officials and the audience/press, although they do wear them in private meetings.)

2. Limiting the Size of the Congregation & Physical Distancing

a. Limiting the Size of the Congregation

- i. Depending upon the size of gatherings permitted by public health authorities, the number of Confirmation candidates at any one ceremony may need to be limited. Additional ceremonies may need to be organized in order to accommodate all candidates.
- ii. In determining the number of candidates, consideration should also be given to the physical presence of their sponsors and families. The number of guests for each candidate may need to be limited.

b. Strict Physical Distancing

- i. In Phase I, strict physical distancing should be maintained. In general, that means that the faithful should maintain a 6-foot distance from each other at all times.
 - Recommendation: Use tape to close off rows of seating in the church, in order to guide the faithful to sit at least 6 feet from each other (for example, allow seating every third row).
 - Pews should be reserved near the front of the church for the Confirmation candidates and their sponsors.
 - If a candidate and sponsor need to maintain strict physical distance from each other (except for the moment of Confirmation itself), then separate places will need to be reserved for each.

- Members of a single household do not need to practice physical distancing with each other and so may sit together in the same row. (For example, if a group arrived in a single private vehicle, they could sit together.)
- ii. In areas where the faithful might stand in line (e.g., as they come forward for Confirmation or to receive Holy Communion), place tape on the floor to indicate proper spacing between persons.
- iii. Station ushers at the entrances of the church to help “direct traffic,” to ensure that the faithful keep 6 feet from each other while entering and exiting the building. (Members of a single household may enter and exit together, since they do not need to practice physical distancing with each other.)
 - Recommendation: ask the congregation to depart by rows at the end of the ceremony to avoid crowding at the exits.
- iv. If all the available spaces are filled, do not admit additional people to the church building.
- v. Encourage the faithful to maintain physical distancing everywhere on the church property (on the church steps, in the parking lot, etc.).
- vi. Develop a plan for restroom use: limit the number of people who enter a restroom at the same time, and place tape on the floor outside of the restroom to indicate where people should stand in line to wait for the restroom, while maintaining a 6-foot distance from each other.
- vii. Singing should be discouraged in general. (Singing, especially in close proximity to others, may increase the risk of viral spread.)
- viii. To the extent possible, the other ministers (deacon, servers, lectors) should maintain a 6-foot distance from the Confirmation celebrant(s) and from each other, except as provided below.
 - Suggestion: The missal and/or ritual book could be placed on a stand at the presidential chair or even on the altar for when the minister recites the prayers, rather than having a server hold the book.
 - Maintain a proper distance in the sacristy and during the entrance and recessional processions.
 - If necessary given the configuration of the church, consider modifying the procession’s route in order to maintain a 6-foot distance from members of the congregation.

3. Specific Provisions for the Conferral of Confirmation

- a. Before the ceremony, the sacristan should pour only the needed amount of chrism into a smaller vessel (or several, if there is more than one minister of Confirmation). After the ceremony, any excess chrism should be reverently disposed of (not returned to the main stock of chrism), and the vessel should be washed with soap and water.
- b. While the ministers should generally maintain a 6-foot distance from each other and ceremony attendees, closer contact is necessary briefly during the conferral of Confirmation. Contact could be minimized as follows:
 - i. At the location where the principal minister will confer Confirmation, a table could be placed, upon which the *Order of Confirmation* ritual book, the vessels of sacred chrism, and any other items for Confirmation could be set.
 - ii. Concelebrating priests and priests joining in the conferral of Confirmation may draw closer to the principal minister as needed (e.g., the laying on of hands, to receive a vessel of chrism from the principal minister).
 - iii. If candidates and their sponsors are called forth into the sanctuary or organized in a line for presentation to a Confirmation minister, make arrangements for proper physical distancing (e.g., by placing tape on the floor).
- c. If recommended by the relevant health authorities, candidates and their sponsors should wear masks during the rite of Confirmation. (As noted above, we recommend that the ministers not wear masks.)
- d. At the laying on of hands (nos. 24–25 in the rite), the principal minister and associated priests extend their hands over the entire group of candidates at once, without physically touching the head of each candidate. At the same time, the principal minister alone says the prayer *Almighty God, Father* (no. 25).
- e. After the group laying on of hands and before the anointing with chrism, the principal minister and any associated priests should perform hand hygiene (e.g., with hand sanitizer). After performing hand hygiene, the principal minister should entrust to any associated priests their vessels of chrism.
- f. Sponsors do not need to wear gloves when placing their right hands upon their respective candidates' shoulders.

- g. For the anointing with chrism (no. 27), the minister may confer the sacrament in the normal way, using his bare right hand and thumb, without gloves or an instrument.⁵
- h. When the minister says, “Peace be with you,” to the candidate, who responds, “And with your spirit,” the rite does not call for any additional gesture or handshake of peace, and we recommend against it during this time.
- i. If there are multiple candidates to be confirmed by any one minister, it is not necessary for the minister to perform hand hygiene in between each candidate, since there is not a significant risk of viral transmission from touching the forehead.
 - i. Nonetheless, if there is concern, a minister could consider using hand sanitizer in between each candidate.
 - ii. The use of gloves by a minister confirming multiple candidates, unless he performs hand hygiene in between candidates while wearing gloves, offers little additional risk reduction in comparison with using bare hands and washing hands after the Confirmations.
- j. After confirming all of the candidates, the principal minister and any associated priests should wash their hands in the traditional manner.
- k. After the ceremony, the vessels for the chrism should be purified and washed.

D. Phase II: Public Ceremonies with Moderate Limits on Public Gatherings and Moderate Physical Distancing

In general, we expect that larger public gatherings will be allowed in phase II, and that places of worship will be able to operate with moderate physical distancing protocols, in accord with the guidance of state and local health authorities.

Observing moderate physical distancing means continuing to avoid “close contact” with those outside one’s household. (“Close contact” generally means being within 6 feet of another person, especially if this will last for 15 minutes or more.) Being within 6 feet of another person for brief moments and exchanges is permitted in this phase.

In this phase, one should generally try to avoid being within 6 feet of others, but where necessary, a momentary interaction presents an acceptable risk, especially if other precautions

⁵ Some have asked whether an instrument might be used to anoint, 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.

are taken. Given how the virus is thought to spread (principally via respiratory droplets from sneezes and coughs), this risk is lower for brief encounters than in cases of prolonged contact.

NB: Depending on the circumstances, some jurisdictions that reach Phase II may later be obliged to return to Phase I, with its greater restrictions. This may call for adaptation of these guidelines in the future as circumstances warrant.

1. General Provisions

- a. Discourage those who are at higher risk from COVID-19 (i.e., those who are older or who have underlying health conditions) from attending the Confirmation ceremony.
- b. Tell the faithful—including Confirmation candidates and their sponsors—that anyone with a cough of any sort and anyone feeling sick should not come to the Confirmation ceremony.
- c. Place hand sanitizer near the entrances to a church. Encourage those entering and exiting to perform hand hygiene.
 - i. The Confirmation candidates and their sponsors should be asked to perform hand hygiene when they enter and exit the church.
- d. The commonly-touched surfaces in the church should be cleaned before and after the Confirmation ceremony. (See [CDC recommendations on cleaning your facility](#).)
- e. A bishop or priest with a respiratory infection of any kind should avoid publically celebrating the sacraments during this phase. The same holds for other ministers who might serve at a sacramental ceremony (deacons, servers, lectors) as well as for sacristans and ushers.
- f. **Masks and face coverings:** During this phase, follow the recommendations of public health authorities regarding face coverings for ceremony attendees.
- g. The principal celebrant and other ministers should not wear masks or gloves during the celebration of Mass or the conferral of Confirmation. Instead, they should remain more than 6 feet from the congregation during the entirety of the ceremony except for the conferral of Confirmation and distribution of Communion. In such circumstances, there is no substantial risk of infection.
 - i. As is the Mass, the Rite of Confirmation is a solemn encounter with a bishop or priest, who is acting *in persona Christi* in this liturgy. As such, it is imbued with powerful sacramental and liturgical symbolism. For the minister of Confirmation to wear a mask and gloves would be a detrimental countersign in this

context, and it is not warranted by considerations of hygiene if the minister remains a proper distance from the congregation. (An analogy: public health officials often do not wear masks during press conferences, given the nature of those public appearances and the distance between the officials and the audience/press, although they do wear them in private meetings.)

2. Limiting the Size of the Congregation & Physical Distancing

a. Limiting the Size of the Congregation

- i. Depending upon the size of gatherings permitted by public health authorities, the number of Confirmation candidates at any one ceremony may need to be limited. Additional ceremonies may need to be organized in order to accommodate all candidates.
- ii. In determining the number of candidates, consideration should also be given to the physical presence of their sponsors and families. The number of guests for each candidate may need to be limited.

b. Moderate Physical Distancing

- i. In phase II, moderate physical distancing should be maintained. To that end, the faithful should maintain a 6-foot distance from each other insofar as possible.
 - Recommendation: Use tape to close off rows of seating in the church, in order to guide the faithful to sit at least 6 feet from each other (for example, allow seating every third row).
 - Pews should be reserved near the front of the church for the Confirmation candidates and their sponsors.
 - If a candidate and sponsor need to maintain strict physical distance from each other (except for the moment of Confirmation itself), then separate places will need to be reserved for each.
 - Members of a single household do not need to practice physical distancing with each other and so may sit together in the same row. (For example, if a group arrived in a single private vehicle, they could sit together.)
- ii. In areas where the faithful might stand in line (e.g., as they come forward for Confirmation or to receive Holy Communion), place tape on the floor to indicate proper spacing between persons.

- iii. Station ushers at the entrances of the church to help “direct traffic,” to ensure that the faithful keep 6 feet from each other while entering and exiting the building. (Members of a single household may enter and exit together, since they do not need to practice physical distancing with each other.)
 - Recommendation: ask the congregation to depart by rows at the end of the ceremony to avoid crowding at the exits.
- iv. If all the available spaces are filled, do not admit additional people to the church building.
- v. Encourage the faithful to maintain physical distancing everywhere on the church property (on the church steps, in the parking lot, etc.).
- vi. Develop a plan for restroom use: limit the number of people who enter a restroom at the same time, and place tape on the floor outside of the restroom to indicate where people should stand in line to wait for the restroom, while maintaining a 6-foot distance from each other.
- vii. Singing should be discouraged in general. (Singing, especially in close proximity to others, may increase the risk of viral spread.)
- viii. It remains advisable for the ministers to maintain a reasonable distance from each other, but in this phase, they may be seated in their normal locations if more suitable in light of the layout of the sanctuary.
 - Suggestion : The missal and/or ritual book could be placed on a stand at the presidential chair or even on the altar for when the minister recites the prayers, rather than having a server hold the book.

3. Specific Provisions for the Conferral of Confirmation

- a. Before the ceremony, the sacristan should pour only the needed amount of chrism into a smaller vessel (or several, if there is more than one minister of Confirmation). After the ceremony, any excess chrism should be reverently disposed of (not returned to the main stock of chrism), and the vessel should be washed with soap and water.
- b. While the ministers should generally maintain a 6-foot distance from each other and ceremony attendees, closer contact is necessary briefly during the conferral of Confirmation. Contact could be minimized as follows.
 - i. At the location where the principal minister will confer Confirmation, a table could be placed, upon which the *Order of*

Confirmation ritual book, the vessels of sacred chrism, and any other items for Confirmation could be set.

- ii. Concelebrating priests and priests joining in the conferral of Confirmation may draw closer to the principal minister as needed (e.g., the laying on of hands, to receive a vessel of chrism from the principal minister).
 - iii. If candidates and their sponsors are called forth into the sanctuary or organized in a line for presentation to a Confirmation minister, make arrangements for proper physical distancing (e.g., by placing tape on the floor).
- c. If recommended by the relevant health authorities, candidates and their sponsors should wear masks during the rite of Confirmation. (As noted above, we recommend that the ministers not wear masks.)
 - d. At the laying on of hands (no. 24–25 in the rite), the principal minister and associated priests do so by extending their hands over the entire group of candidates at once, without physically touching the head of each candidate. At the same time, the principal minister alone says the prayer *Almighty God, Father* (no. 25).
 - e. After the group laying on of hands and before the anointing with chrism, the principal minister and any associated priests should perform hand hygiene (e.g., with hand sanitizer). After performing hand hygiene, the principal minister should entrust to any associated priests their vessels of chrism.
 - f. Sponsors do not need to wear gloves when placing their right hands upon their respective candidates' shoulders.
 - g. For the anointing with chrism (no. 27), the minister may confer the sacrament in the normal way, using his bare right hand and thumb, without gloves or an instrument.⁶
 - h. When the minister says, "Peace be with you," to the candidate, who responds, "And with your spirit," the rite does not call for any additional gesture or handshake of peace, and we recommend against it at this time.
 - i. If there are multiple candidates to be confirmed by any one minister, it is not necessary for the minister to perform hand hygiene in between each candidate, since there is not a significant risk of viral transmission from touching the forehead.

⁶ Some have asked whether an instrument might be used to anoint, 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.

- i. Nonetheless, if there is concern, a minister could consider using hand sanitizer in between each candidate.
- ii. The use of gloves by a minister confirming multiple candidates, unless he performs hand hygiene in between candidates while wearing gloves, offers little additional risk reduction in comparison with using bare hands and washing hands after the Confirmations.
- j. After confirming all of the candidates, the principal minister and any associated priests should wash their hands in the traditional manner.
- k. After the ceremony, the vessels for the chrism should be purified and washed.

E. Phase III: Public Ceremonies with Minimal Limits on Public Gatherings and Limited Physical Distancing

According to the [current guidance from the U.S. federal government](#), in phase III, there will not be limits on the size of gatherings. At-risk individuals will be encouraged to continue to practice physical distancing. Places of worship may operate under limited physical distancing protocols.

In this phase, the faithful need not remain 6-feet from each other at all times, although they should avoid crowding to the extent possible. In church, therefore, it will no longer be necessary to use tape to close off large portions of seating. However, churches should designate special seating for at-risk persons where physical distancing can be practiced.

NB: Depending on the circumstances, some jurisdictions that reach Phase III may later be obliged to return to earlier phases. This may call for adaptation of these guidelines in the future as circumstances warrant.

1. General Provisions

- a. Encourage those who are at higher risk from COVID-19 (i.e., those who are older or who have underlying health conditions) to sit in special seating when they come to church and to continue to practice physical distancing.
- b. Tell the faithful—including Confirmation candidates and their sponsors—that anyone with a cough of any sort and anyone feeling sick should not come to the Confirmation ceremony.
- c. Place hand sanitizer near the entrances to a church. Encourage those entering and exiting to perform hand hygiene.
 - i. The Confirmation candidates and their sponsors should be asked to perform hand hygiene when they enter and exit the church.

- d. The commonly-touched surfaces in the church should be cleaned before and after the Confirmation ceremony. (See [CDC recommendations on cleaning your facility.](#))
- e. A bishop or priest with a respiratory infection of any kind should avoid publically celebrating the sacraments during this phase. The same holds for other ministers who might serve at a sacramental ceremony (deacons, servers, lectors) as well as for sacristans and ushers.
- f. **Masks and face coverings:** During this phase, follow the recommendations of public health authorities regarding face coverings for ceremony attendees.
- g. The principal celebrant and other ministers should not wear masks or gloves during the celebration of Mass or the conferral of Confirmation.
- h. The ministers no longer need to remain more than 6 feet from the congregation, but should take care to avoid crowding.
- i. It remains advisable for the ministers to maintain a reasonable distance from each other, but in this phase, they may be seated in their normal locations.

2. Limited Physical Distancing

- a. Designate special seating for at-risk persons. Indicate clearly (by taping-off seating, placing signs, etc.) that this seating is for persons who are practicing physical distancing (maintaining a 6-foot distance from others who are not members of their household). Members of a single household do not need to practice physical distancing with each other and so may sit together in the same row.
- b. Pews should be reserved near the front of the church for the Confirmation candidates and their sponsors.
- c. If a candidate and sponsor need to maintain physical distance from each other (e.g., if one of them is an at-risk person), then separate places will need to be reserved for each.
- d. In areas where at-risk candidates and sponsors may stand in line (for example, waiting to present themselves to the minister), place tape on the floor to indicate proper spacing between persons.
- e. Encourage the faithful to avoid crowding, especially in high-traffic areas (for example, when entering or exiting the church, in the vestibule, etc.).

3. Specific Provisions for the Conferral of Confirmation

- a. Before the ceremony, the sacristan should pour only the needed amount of chrism into a smaller vessel (or several, if there is more than one minister

of Confirmation). After the ceremony, any excess chrism should be reverently disposed of (not returned to the main stock of chrism), and the vessel should be washed with soap and water.

- b. If at-risk candidates and sponsors are called forth into the sanctuary or organized in a line for presentation to a Confirmation minister, make arrangements for physical distancing (e.g., by placing tape on the floor).
- c. If recommended by the relevant health authorities, candidates and their sponsors should wear masks during the rite of Confirmation. (As noted above, we recommend that the ministers not wear masks.)
- d. At the laying on of hands (no. 24–25 in the rite), the principal minister and associated priests do so by extending their hands over them, that is, over the entire group of candidates at once, without physically touching the head of each candidate. At the same time, the principal minister alone says the prayer *Almighty God, Father* (no. 25).
- e. After the group laying on of hands and before the anointing with chrism, the principal minister and any associated priests should perform hand hygiene (e.g., with hand sanitizer). After performing hand hygiene, the principal minister should entrust to any associated priests their vessels of chrism.
- f. Sponsors do not need to wear gloves when placing their right hands upon their respective candidates' shoulders.
- g. For the anointing with chrism (no. 27), the minister may confer the sacrament in the normal way, using his bare right hand and thumb, without gloves or an instrument.⁷
- h. When the minister says, "Peace be with you," to the candidate, who responds, "And with your spirit," the rite does not call for any additional gesture or handshake of peace, and we recommend against it during this time.
- i. If there are multiple candidates to be confirmed by any one minister, it is not necessary for the minister to perform hand hygiene in between each candidate, since there is not a significant risk of viral transmission from touching the forehead.
 - i. Nonetheless, if there is concern, a minister could consider using hand sanitizer in between each candidate.
 - ii. The use of gloves by a minister confirming multiple candidates, unless he performs hand hygiene in between candidates while

⁷ Some have asked whether an instrument might be used to anoint, 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.

wearing gloves, offers little additional risk reduction in comparison with using bare hands and washing hands after the Confirmations.

- j. After confirming all of the candidates, the principal minister and any associated priests should wash their hands in the traditional manner.
- k. After the ceremony, the vessels for the chrism should be purified and washed.