

ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF SYRACUSE

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

240 E. ONONDAGA STREET, SYRACUSE, NY 13202-2608

May 21, 2021

Dear Diocesan Family,

A year ago on Pentecost Sunday, the churches of the Diocese of Syracuse were re-opened for public worship with new protocols for our parish churches involving the wearing of masks and social distancing. Fast forwarding 365 days, the public has been informed that we are now at a new stage in our response to COVID-19 and that persons who are **fully vaccinated are not required to wear masks in public or maintain social distance.**

Naturally, there is rejoicing that we have come this far in dealing with the coronavirus, but there is still apprehension, also. People worry about its recurrence, especially if we abandon protocols that have worked to decrease the virus' rate in our communities. We do ponder whether safety regulations are being abandoned too fast; and if our neighbors will continue to focus on the wellbeing of the public, in general?

Respecting such concerns and after consulting with local officials, along with brother bishops and my diocesan staff, I am issuing today revised protocols for our parishes and diocesan institutions. They are meant to aid to a fuller return to Divine Worship on the Lord's Day by providing for a less restrictive, but still safe worship environment. These protocols go into effect immediately, but it may take our parishes until next weekend to implement them fully, so I ask for your patience and understanding.

Where possible, we are seeking to provide for space in our churches for those who may wish to continue to observe safe distancing measures. We respect anyone's desire to wear a mask in Church; and will require our clergy and lay ministers of Holy Communion to wear a mask for the distribution of communion as a safety measure.

With the lifting of restrictions, I will discontinue in the Diocese of Syracuse the dispensation from Sunday Mass beginning on the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ on Sunday, June 6th. From apostolic times, the Church has always held the obligation to attend Holy Mass on the Lord's Day as a most sacred responsibility. As of the first Sunday of June, the Catholic faithful are asked to resume their full and active participation in the Eucharistic liturgy through physical attendance at the Saturday Vigil Mass or Sunday Mass.

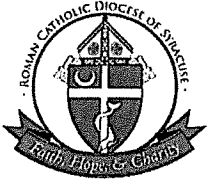
It should be noted as well that anyone who is frail or at risk due to advanced age or medical conditions is *always* excused from this obligation. Caregivers, too, may have to use prudential judgment about attendance at Mass carefully considering the risk factors involved.

I hope the accompanying protocols will provide both reassurance and the desire for renewed participation for our diocesan family in the Sacred Liturgy. Be assured of my continued prayers for all members of this Diocesan Church and your loved ones, and please pray for me.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Douglas J. Lucia
Bishop of Syracuse

Faith • Hope • Charity



DIOCESE OF SYRACUSE

THE CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENTS IN TIME OF PANDEMIC

UPDATES

The following summary is based on updates made to the diocesan *Instructions for the Celebration of the Sacraments in Time of Pandemic* after consulting new guidelines provided by the CDC, NYS and the advice of medical professionals.

GENERAL

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued Interim Public Health Recommendations for Fully Vaccinated People on May 13, 2021. Effective May 19, 2021 NYS has accepted the CDC guidance and updated its own rules and regulations regarding masks and social distancing for fully vaccinated individuals. Considering these changes, the Diocese of Syracuse has updated its protocols to include modifications to its requirements of mask wearing, social distance and other related items as specified below.

It is important to note that appropriate measures are being taken to accommodate the faithful with the awareness that they include both vaccinated and unvaccinated members. **We rely on the goodness and honesty of our people to follow State guidelines regarding those fully vaccinated and unvaccinated.**

PARTICULAR: THE HOLY SACRIFICE OF THE MASS

- Parishes are no longer required to pre-register for Mass. Parishes may continue to use the screening processes they have in place at their own discretion.
- Parishioners who are **fully vaccinated** are not required to wear a face mask at Mass.
- All who prefer to continue wearing facial covering and social distancing are free to do so.
- Those who are **not** fully vaccinated should observe social distancing of six feet from individuals not in their household. They are to wear a face mask at Mass. Even if fully vaccinated, social distancing from those who are wearing a mask is requested.
- If possible, it is highly recommended to create “a physical distance section” within the church for those who are required to wear masks and engage in social distancing and/or for those who may be fully vaccinated but wish to continue to follow distancing practices.
- It is no longer necessary to block off every other row of pews. Parishioners may be seated in a staggered fashion while respecting six feet of social distance, where required.
- Deacons, lectors, servers, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, ushers, and sacristans must continue to follow prescribed handwashing and sanitizing practices.
- The Offertory procession with the gifts of bread and wine may resume. Offertory collections with baskets may resume by ushers. They should not make physical contact with parishioners.
- The Sign of Peace is optional and there still should be no physical contact.
- The distribution of Holy Communion using hand sanitizer, **masks**, distancing, etc. is to continue.
 - Ciboria are to continue to be covered or placed to the side of the altar during the Eucharistic Prayer.
 - The Precious Blood is still not to be offered.
 - While in the Communion line, communicants should maintain social distancing from those not in their household.
- Congregational singing continues to be permitted. Choirs comprised of vaccinated members may resume normal activities. For any unvaccinated member, social distancing must be maintained, and a mask must be worn.