

UPDATED DIOCESE OF PITTSBURGH COVID-19 SAFETY PROTOCOLS FOR CLERGY, PARISHES AND INSTITUTIONS

In a continuing commitment to care for the health, safety, and spiritual well-being of the faithful, in the Diocese of Pittsburgh, Bishop David Zubik announces the following updated COVID-19 Safety Protocols. **These practices are effective January 7, 2022, and are to be continued until further notice.** The updates are based on the dramatic surge in community spread of the Omicron variant of the COVID-19 virus, and will be re-evaluated on an ongoing basis as more information from the CDC and local healthcare officials becomes available.

Parishes

Effective immediately and until further notice:

- As leaders in their parishes and in the community, unless extraordinary circumstances warrant otherwise, all priests and deacons must wear masks during the celebration of Mass at all times, including when preaching and at the altar.
- All clergy must submit vaccination status and proof of vaccination to our Clergy Office **no later than January 18, 2022**. All clergy who have not yet received a COVID vaccination are reminded of the guidance of Pope Francis on the matter and of their role in the community and are strongly urged to receive a COVID vaccination.
- Everyone entrusted with the distribution of Holy Communion must wear a mask, and must also sanitize their hands immediately prior to distribution. Care must be taken not to directly touch the communicant, especially if distributing on the tongue. If contact is made, the person distributing Holy Communion must re-sanitize their hands before continuing.
- All Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, servers, greeters, ushers, lectors, and cantors must wear a mask. In addition, faith formation leaders, catechists, and those who visit the sick or homebound must wear a mask.
- Choir members are to be masked at all times.
- The presentation of the gifts is suspended until further notice.
- As already directed, the practice of shaking hands to offer the Sign of Peace is suspended until further notice.
- As also previously directed, those attending Mass are urgently encouraged to wear masks, regardless of vaccination status. Based on their age, health history, and family considerations, parishioners must make prudent decisions regarding getting vaccinated, wearing a mask, and staying home if not feeling well. As a reminder, anyone who is sick, feels they are at risk, or is a primary caregiver, as well as those who have serious anxiety about being part of a large group at this time are excused from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass (CCC #2181)

- It is strongly recommended that any parish events outside of Holy Mass are to either be cancelled, rescheduled, or be held virtually.
- It is strongly recommended that where possible, parish staff work remotely. Those who do need to work on site must wear masks when in common spaces. Also, all meetings should be held virtually.
- Livestream Mass options are to continue so that we may serve those who are not able to come to Mass in-person.

Diocesan Events

Events are to be held virtually or re-scheduled. Events that must be held should follow the above mitigation protocols.