



Diocese of Davenport

Office of the Bishop

COVID-19 PANDEMIC Update to Protocols – August 11, 2021

The current surge in COVID-19 infections, driven by the Delta variant of SARS-CoV-2 as well as by the still significant portion of the population who are not vaccinated, is worsening. Iowa is considered a “high” transmission state, and all our counties are experiencing “high” or “substantial” transmission regularly.

This pandemic is not over, especially for those who are not vaccinated. In particular, we need to be concerned about children under the age of 12, who are not yet eligible for the vaccine. Please keep in mind the steps necessary to help prevent the spread of this virus: vaccination, masking, social distancing, handwashing, minimizing time together, and good ventilation.

Given our current situation, and taking into consideration CDC guidelines, the following additional safety measures are being put in place. They should be implemented as much as is feasible for this weekend and by no later than next weekend.

1. We urge that masks be worn by everyone (over the age of 2) at any indoor gathering or public space, including the liturgy. We especially urge priests, deacons, and other ministers to set a good example in this regard.
 - a. At the liturgy, masks must be worn by those distributing communion.
 - b. If any gathering consists only of those vaccinated, masks may be omitted.
2. Parishes should return to social distancing measures, in a manner that works best for their community.
3. Congregational singing is temporarily suspended. A single, masked and vaccinated cantor may be used.
 - a. If the liturgy is celebrated outdoors, masked members of the assembly may also sing.

We have received a number of questions regarding parish festivals and the like. At this point, there is no need to cancel them. Instead, we ask that you be intentional about reducing risk as much as possible. For example:

1. “Carry-out” food is safer than “eating-in.”
2. If eating in, outdoor seating (if a tent, don’t lower the side flaps!) is better than indoor seating.
3. If indoor seating is used, wearing masks while not eating and keeping tables apart would be recommended. Good ventilation, and spending as little time as possible indoors, are important.

We hope that these changes will be short-lived. The pandemic seems to be exhibiting an up-and-down pattern, so it is hoped that this surge will peak soon and start to decline. However, it may be that large events and the return to school may prolong this wave. We just have to wait and see. But, as soon as it is possible, we will relax these precautions.

+ *Thomas R. Zinkula*

Most Rev. Thomas R. Zinkula