

Statement on the Wearing of the Face Mask During the Celebration of Holy Mass

In discussions with brother Bishops and members of the Medical Community I am sending this new Instruction on the Wearing of the Face Mask during Mass.

The wearing of the Face Mask is still the most effective way of preventing the spread of the COVID-19 Coronavirus.

However, several new factors have come into play recently. First, the number of cases locally has dropped dramatically. Second, large numbers of our parishioners have taken advantage of the vaccine that obviously is effective and has dramatically reduced the number of new cases. Third, on Thursday, May 13, 2021, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention updated two protocols: For those fully vaccinated Masks will no longer be mandated in crowds and Social Distancing will also end. However, these two items pertain only to those who have received the vaccine.

Those who have received the vaccine are at an advantage and have protection against getting the virus. Those who have chosen not to receive the vaccine do not have this protection and hence are more vulnerable.

Therefore, I suggest that the local Pastor, in consultation with their congregation may consider the following: That the ones who have received the vaccine may discontinue the use of the Face Mask; however, the ones who have not received the vaccine should continue to wear the Face Mask. This is especially true of those who are more vulnerable due to age or have pre-existing medical conditions.

Let me make this clear: I am not *making the decision* for the parishes. The pastors know the situation in regard to the virus and the number of parishioners who have received the vaccine better than anyone else. Parishes are quite distinct in this regard.

However, should the situation change in regard to the number of people contracting the virus, this Instruction would change accordingly.

This certainly is good news! It is my hope that those who have been hesitant to personally participate in the Holy Mass will now return to their local parish and will once again have the privilege and joy of receiving the Eucharist. You will all be welcome and I hope this return will give you great joy.

In this beautiful month of May, which is always dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary, let us pray that this Mother of the Son of God, the Mother of the Church and our Mother intercede for us!

Most Reverend Patrick J. Zurek
Bishop of Amarillo

May 14, 2021