



THE DIOCESE OF YAKIMA • PASTORAL OFFICE
LA DIÓCESIS DE YAKIMA • CENTRO PASTORAL

To: Priests, Diaconate Community, Religious, Seminarians, Parish Staff

From: Msgr. Robert Siler, Chancellor

Date: May 27, 2021

RE: New Facial Covering Guidance for Religious Services

After consultation, Bishop Joseph Tyson has decided to adapt for our parish religious services (Masses, RE classes, etc.) the [recent guidance for businesses](#) promulgated by Governor Jay Inslee, supplemented by one key point listed in new state guidance for [Weddings, Funerals and Events](#) (both documents are attached for your review, but the points listed below are the guidance Bishop Tyson is hereby promulgating, effective May 28, for the Diocese of Yakima):

- All individuals considered as fully vaccinated by the CDC definition (having received two (2) doses of the Moderna, Pfizer, or AstraZeneca Vaccine, or, one (1) dose of the Johnson & Johnson Vaccine at least two weeks previous to the religious service, will not be required to wear a facial covering or maintain social distancing. (Children under the age of 16 attending with vaccinated parents will be considered fully vaccinated at this time.)
- Those who have had a negative COVID-19 test in the preceding 72 hours also may congregate with vaccinated individuals without facial coverings or social distancing requirements as well.
- Parishes will post signs stating that facial coverings are optional for these

parishioners. For those who don't have them, parishes will continue to provide facial coverings as well as to make hand sanitizer available at the entry ways of churches so that good public hygiene can be maintained.

- In support of the general rule stated above, parishes may choose to implement an honor system and assume that parishioners who are not wearing face coverings are fully vaccinated or have recently tested negative.
- However, at the pastor's discretion, a parish may also choose to engage with parishioners to determine if they are fully vaccinated or are otherwise exempt from the face covering requirement. If an inquiry is made, and the parishioners respond stating they are fully vaccinated and therefore exempt under the Proclamation, or have tested negative within the past 72 hours, the parish may allow the parishioners to enter without further inquiry.
- If an inquiry is made, those who identify themselves as not yet vaccinated, or have not tested negative recently, must maintain social distancing and wear facial coverings while inside the church unless they are otherwise exempt. A socially distant seating accommodation will be provided to them (and their family members) should they request it.
- At the pastor's discretion, parishes also may ask parishioners for proof of vaccination. If this is done, it is not necessary to retain a copy of the proof presented. An usher or greeter should record that it was viewed. Under no circumstance should providing evidence of vaccination be a requirement for entry into the church. If proof is asked for and not provided, the parishioners are to be accommodated in keeping with the previous point.
- Parishes are no longer required to have parishioners screened for temperature, or, to complete health attestation questionnaires prior to entry into the church. The pastor may continue these procedures as a matter of caution at his discretion, including keeping lists for up to 14 days for contact tracing purposes should it become necessary.
- Individuals exhibiting symptoms associated with COVID-19 will be advised to refrain from attending parish religious services and events until symptoms subside. These simple CDC posters of symptoms may be helpful to post: [ENGLISH](#) | [SPANISH](#)
- The dispensation from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass remains in effect. Livestreamed services or listings of televised Masses should be made available to help parishioners who choose not to attend Mass to maintain a spiritual connection to the church.
- The pastor may choose to reinstitute fellowship gatherings after a religious service has concluded. If parishes does so and provide food or beverages, the eating and drinking requirements apply as outlined in the state's March 17, 2021 [Eating and Drinking Establishment COVID-19 Requirements](#).

Should more restrictive requirements come forth from the Governor's Office, State Department of Health, or a local Health Authority, we will provide further guidance and direction. For help with interpreting and applying this guidance, feel free to contact Doug Rich at doug.rch@yakimadiocese.org or me at robert.siler@yakimadiocese.org.

On behalf of Bishop Tyson, we want to thank all of you for your diligence during these very difficult past 15 months. We want to welcome the Faithful back to our churches in a manner that is safe and welcoming to all, and we remain optimistic that our continued attention as we “open up” will help to keep cases of COVID-19 in decline.

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