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COVID Procedures Updates for the Diocese of Pittsburgh

As variants of the COVID-19 virus continue to spread, the Diocese of Pittsburgh is updating safety procedures at Mass and Bishop David Zubik is urging everyone to get vaccinated and to wear masks when indoors with others.

Effective immediately:

- All ministers of the Eucharist, ushers and greeters must wear masks while engaging in their ministries, regardless of their vaccination status.
- As a change in a previous announcement, outdoor Masses may continue until further notice. (Previously it was announced that outdoor Masses would cease as of September 1.)

Bishop Zubik met virtually on Friday August 6, 2021, with all the Catholic bishops of Pennsylvania and signed their joint statement about COVID safety and the Mass. As previously announced, the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days will resume on the weekend of August 14-15, but with the age-old exemptions for those who are sick, at risk, are caregivers and also for those with concerns about being in a crowd due to COVID.

Each bishop was also expected to make his own statement based on conditions in each diocese.

“Our response to the pandemic falls under the commandment, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself,’” Bishop Zubik wrote in the attached letter to clergy of the Diocese of Pittsburgh.

“For us as members of the Church of Pittsburgh, any response to COVID must be guided by the Catholic social principles of solidarity and the common good. It is impossible in these circumstances to make decisions that affect one person alone. COVID affects the whole community, so we must act with the whole community in mind.”

He urged everyone to follow CDC guidance with regard to masks and vaccinations, adding that public officials have given assurance that there is no shortage of vaccine for anyone living within the six-county Diocese of Pittsburgh.

“Even those who have been vaccinated can carry and spread the virus, but research continues to show that masking provides significant protection for you and those with whom you interact. In the words of Pope Francis, vaccination and masking are ‘acts of charity,’” Bishop Zubik wrote. It is also important to note that both Pope emeritus Benedict XVI and Pope Francis have themselves been vaccinated.

Given the rapidly changing dynamics of the COVID-19 virus, the bishop wrote that these policies could change “based on the best practices and guidance of county, state, and federal public health officials.”