

## **Changes in Covid-19 Protocol - May 22/23, 2021**

### **Based on Recent Diocesan Directives**

Over the past several weeks there have been ongoing updates from the CDC and the state of Pennsylvania. Two of the most significant announcements for us are related to the wearing of masks and increased seating capacity.

#### ***On Friday, May 14, the diocese published the following news release:***

“In continued alignment with local, state, and federal health guidelines, **effective immediately, the fully vaccinated may attend Masses and all gatherings on parish property without wearing a mask.** To accommodate those who are not fully vaccinated, and those who may feel more comfortable seated around others who are wearing a mask, a section in every church will be maintained for mask wearing.”

#### ***We would like to provide further clarification regarding this directive:***

- In each of our Churches there is a section for those who **wish to be seated around others who are wearing a mask** (and may still be reluctant to be seated around others NOT wearing a mask).
- Ushers will direct you to the designated mask area upon request

#### ***Some Questions this raises:***

- **If someone is wearing a mask, are they required to sit in this designated mask wearing section?** **NO**, they are not required to sit in the section maintained for mask wearing. Anyone wearing a mask is free to sit anywhere in the Church.
- **If someone is NOT wearing a mask, can they sit in the designated mask wearing section?** **NO**, because this area needs to be maintained for those who may feel more comfortable seated only around others who are wearing a mask. Some people are not yet comfortable being in close proximity to others not wearing a mask.
- **If someone is wearing a mask, does this mean they are not vaccinated?** **NO**, in fact many people who are fully vaccinated, have decided to continue to wear a mask in public at this time.
- **Is social distancing still maintained throughout the Church?** **Yes**, from now through May 30, we will maintain social distancing throughout the Church. Beginning May 31, the only section of the Church that will maintain social distancing is the area designated for those who wish to wear a mask. If you chose to sit in this section, you must wear a mask.
- **How do you know if someone NOT wearing a mask is fully vaccinated?** The CDC, State of Pennsylvania, and county directives have not identified needing to verify if someone is vaccinated. It is the “honor system” and the assumption that those who have not been vaccinated are following the State directives.

**The other significant change that will be implemented on May 31, 2021 is related to seating capacity. The statement from the diocese is as follows:**

“Given Pennsylvania Governor Tom Wolf’s announcement of May 4, 2021 regarding changes to COVID-19 mitigation efforts in the state, effective Memorial Day, May 31, 2021 and until further notice, all Diocese of Pittsburgh churches may be open at 100% seating capacity.”

**Some Questions this raises:**

- **Will social distancing still be maintained throughout the Church from May 31, 2021 on? No,** the only section where social distancing will be maintained, is the designated section for mask wearing. If you chose to sit in this section, you must wear a mask.
  
- **What other liturgical changes will be implemented on May 31, 2021?**
  - We will resume the use of Holy Water.
  - The offertory procession will resume.
  - The collection basket can resume being circulated throughout the pews.
  - The sign of peace is not yet able to be reinstated into the Mass.
  - The reception of the Precious Blood of Christ from the chalice, is not yet to be reinstated in the Mass.

**Thank you for your patience as we adjust to returning to a greater sense of normalcy. If you have questions, please call the parish office.**

### **Pope Francis’s Prayer to Mary during Coronavirus Pandemic**

O Mary, you always shine on our path as a sign of salvation and of hope. We entrust ourselves to you, Health of the Sick, who at the cross took part in Jesus’ pain, keeping your faith firm.

You, Salvation of Your People, know what we need, and we are sure you will provide so that, as in Cana of Galilee, we may return to joy and to feasting after this time of trial.

Help us, Mother of Divine Love, to conform to the will of the Father and to do as we are told by Jesus, who has taken upon himself our sufferings and carried our sorrows to lead us, through the cross, to the joy of the resurrection.

Amen.

Under your protection, we seek refuge, Holy Mother of God. Do not disdain the entreaties of we who are in trial, but deliver us from every danger, O glorious and blessed Virgin.

Amen.

(Adapted from Vatican News.)