



DIOCESE OF FAIRBANKS

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OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

P.N. BCZ 21/003

20 May 2021

DECREE

Coronavirus Update #7: New Masking & Distancing Policies

Dear Brothers & Sisters in Christ,

Following new guidance issued by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), effective immediately, churches in the Diocese of Fairbanks are to allow fully vaccinated people to attend Masses and other gatherings without wearing masks or social distancing. Those who are not fully vaccinated are strongly encouraged to continue wearing masks when in large gatherings.

One is fully vaccinated when at least two weeks have passed from the second shot of Pfizer and Moderna vaccines (and on shot of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine). No verbal, written, or other verification of full vaccination is required. The faithful are reminded that every person must make an informed and responsible decision for their own well-being and be conscious of the needs and sensitivities of others. All are asked to be patient and understanding with those who may continue to wear masks for various reasons.

In recent months, the CDC has stated that the risk of infection from surfaces, such as pews, is low. To that end it is no longer necessary for parishes to disinfect pews after each Mass. However, parishes should regularly clean surfaces each week as part of their routine upkeep. Reception of Holy Communion in the form of the Precious Blood continues to be suspended.

I recommend that priests and ministers who are fully vaccinated still wear masks during the distribution of Holy Communion at Mass. I also recommend that greeters and ushers do the same. I trust each pastor or administrator with the discretion to determine the policy for their parish.

I am entrusting pastors and administrators to implement the new policy as best they can, and I encourage them to continue to work with their parish leadership to make the necessary changes and adjustments based on local circumstance and health mandates.

While the general dispensation from the Sunday obligation was lifted in July 2020 (BCZ 20/17) there are still some who may be considered high risk and are nervous to attend Mass in person. I encourage individuals concerned with returning to Mass to consult with their pastor. Pastors may dispense individuals from their Sunday obligation for a just and reasonable cause (cf. canons 89 & 90).

We will continue to live stream the Saturday 4:30pm Vigil and Sunday 11am Mass from Sacred Heart Cathedral for those who are unable to attend in person.

May God strengthen and unite as we continue our earthly journey towards the Kingdom.

This Decree is effective immediately.

Sincerely in Christ,

†Most Reverend Chad W. Zielinski
Catholic Bishop of Northern Alaska
Diocese of Fairbanks

