

May 14, 2021

Dear pastor,

In light of new protocols from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention regarding mask use, which Gov. Walz said our state would follow, all individuals who are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 are no longer required to wear a mask for parish indoor events/gatherings, including Mass, effective immediately. Those who aren't vaccinated are strongly encouraged to continue wearing masks indoors for their safety and the safety of others in line with the CDC and state guidance.

Also, please note:

- As I noted in my letter to you earlier this week, the Sunday Mass obligation remains suspended until further notice. Please remind parishioners to be sensitive to those in your parish who may choose to continue to wear masks, not yet come to Mass, or not participate in some aspects of the liturgy (e.g. handshaking at the sign of peace) because of health conditions or other concerns. All should feel welcomed and included during this time of transition.
- I am working with my advisors on guidelines/protocols that are specific to camps, overnight gatherings, TEC, Koinonia and similar activities. These will be coming soon.
- Catholic schools will continue to follow their safe learning plans and other protocols specific to them. This means they also will follow the mask protocols they currently have in place until the end of the school year. This applies to all students and adults, including parents and guests participating in school events and activities.
- The date set previously for the resumption of funeral luncheons and wedding receptions at parishes and well as for parish festivals and similar parish celebrations remains May 28.
- The liturgical adjustments outlined in my previous letter that will be reinstated for the feast of Pentecost remain, with one request: I have heard from individuals who have health and safety concerns about receiving Communion in the hand from Communion ministers who also are distributing Communion on the tongue. I am requesting separate lines for receiving Communion in the hand and on the tongue so that all feel safe in receiving the sacrament.

Last, I strongly encourage you to receive a COVID-19 vaccine yourself, and I ask you to urge your parishioners to do the same. I can't emphasize enough how important this is for keeping everyone healthy. Vaccinations are key to making continued progress against the virus and ensuring a safe return to worship and parish life. I agree with Pope Francis who has said that everyone should receive the vaccine, because not receiving it not only puts one's own life at risk but also the lives of others.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ Donald J. Kettler

+Donald J. Kettler
Bishop, Diocese of Saint Cloud