



Memorandum

Cathedral Square Plaza

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

To: Priests
From: Bishop Edward C. Malesic
Date: 14 May 2021
Re: COVID 19 protocol updates

Dear brothers,

I know many of us are COVID exhausted and are eager to have the pandemic behind us. I realize that there is some confusion between the CDC instructions recently released and the State of Ohio instructions that were released and then updated earlier on Friday afternoon.

In his May 12 statement, Governor DeWine said that “it is time to end the health orders” and announced that he had asked the Ohio Department of Health to remove most pandemic health orders on June 2. On that date, he said, the following health restrictions would be removed: facial covering protocols, social distancing guidelines, and capacity restrictions for indoor and outdoor events.

On May 13, the CDC issued new guidelines that immediately lifted the requirements of wearing masks and social distancing for those who were fully vaccinated. Today, the Governor said that he intends to amend health orders to comply with the CDC guidance.

The Governor has consistently made it clear to the bishops of Ohio that religious institutions are not regulated by his state mandates out of concern for religious liberty. However, the Diocese of Cleveland has used the Governor’s decisions to guide our own response to the pandemic.

At this time, the Governor has not yet issued any written document amending the current health orders that are in place until June 2. And so, I am asking that you continue to require the wearing of masks and social distancing for all persons in your parish churches and events according to diocesan policy. In the next few days, as the Governor’s intentions become clearer, that decision may be altered. However, I must still place the safety of those who remain unvaccinated, including our young children, at the forefront of any decisions that will be made.

I realize that there is much confusion on the part of many people as we begin to make changes that will bring our parish liturgies and other events back to something approaching “normal.” I only ask that you continue to do your best in this challenging pastoral situation.

You should also have received the letter from the bishops of Ohio indicating that the dispensation of the obligation to attend Mass will end for each respective diocese on the first weekend of June. Until that time all of the current protocols for the pandemic remain in effect. I will be writing to you next week at the earliest with more details regarding holy water fonts, Holy Communion from the cup, the exchange of peace, signing, distribution of Holy Communion to the homebound, social distancing, wearing of face masks and how to manage cleaning and care of public spaces.

Thank you for your patience and understanding as we just received this information, as you did, yesterday and want to make certain we communicate properly to assist you in the return to some sense of normalcy as we move to the post-pandemic era. Know that your health and safety and that of all of our parishioners is of the utmost importance to me as we begin to transition over the next few weeks. That is why, if you have not already done so, I urge you to be vaccinated against COVID-19 for your safety and for the safety of those in your parish who have chosen not to be vaccinated. The best way to end this pandemic and allow persons in our churches to be safe is for a large number of us to be vaccinated against this disease. I wouldn't ask you to do what I have not done myself. Please seriously consider this.

Be assured of my continued prayers for you and gratitude for all your good work and ministry. May God bless you and those you love.