



ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF SYRACUSE

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

240 E. ONONDAGA STREET, SYRACUSE, NY 13202-2608

May 21, 2021

Dear Diocesan Family,

A year ago on Pentecost Sunday, the churches of the Diocese of Syracuse were re-opened for public worship with new protocols for our parish churches involving the wearing of masks and social distancing. Fast forwarding 365 days, the public has been informed that we are now at a new stage in our response to COVID-19 and that persons who are **fully vaccinated are not required to wear masks in public or maintain social distance**.

Naturally, there is rejoicing that we have come this far in dealing with the coronavirus, but there is still apprehension, also. People worry about its recurrence, especially if we abandon protocols that have worked to decrease the virus' rate in our communities. We do ponder whether safety regulations are being abandoned too fast; and if our neighbors will continue to focus on the wellbeing of the public, in general?

Respecting such concerns and after consulting with local officials, along with brother bishops and my diocesan staff, I am issuing today revised protocols for our parishes and diocesan institutions. They are meant to aid to a fuller return to Divine Worship on the Lord's Day by providing for a less restrictive, but still safe worship environment. These protocols go into effect immediately, but it may take our parishes until next weekend to implement them fully, so I ask for your patience and understanding.

Where possible, we are seeking to provide for space in our churches for those who may wish to continue to observe safe distancing measures. We respect anyone's desire to wear a mask in Church; and will require our clergy and lay ministers of Holy Communion to wear a mask for the distribution of communion as a safety measure.

With the lifting of restrictions, I will discontinue in the Diocese of Syracuse the dispensation from Sunday Mass beginning on the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ on Sunday, June 6th. From apostolic times, the Church has always held the obligation to attend Holy Mass on the Lord's Day as a most sacred responsibility. As of the first Sunday of June, the Catholic faithful are asked to resume their full and active participation in the Eucharistic liturgy through physical attendance at the Saturday Vigil Mass or Sunday Mass.

It should be noted as well that anyone who is frail or at risk due to advanced age or medical conditions is *always* excused from this obligation. Caregivers, too, may have to use prudential judgment about attendance at Mass carefully considering the risk factors involved.

I hope the accompanying protocols will provide both reassurance and the desire for renewed participation for our diocesan family in the Sacred Liturgy. Be assured of my continued prayers for all members of this Diocesan Church and your loved ones, and please pray for me.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Douglas J. Lucia
Bishop of Syracuse

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