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OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

MEMORANDUM

DATE : May 26, 2021
TO: All Clergy, Religious, Seminarians, Principals, Diocesan Staff and Religious Education Directors
FROM: Bishop Oscar A. Solis
WHAT: Latest Covid-19 Diocesan Guidelines

Greetings of Christ's peace! The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Governor Spencer Cox have issued new guidelines lifting restrictions on the wearing of masks and physical/social distancing for those who have been vaccinated except where required by federal, state, local, tribal, or territorial laws, rules, and regulations, including local business and workplace guidance. The updated recommendations were based on the scientific findings that the wearing of mask, social distancing and especially the availability of the vaccines have decreased the continued spread of the Coronavirus infections.

Many pastors are reporting a significant increase in the numbers of the faithful returning to Mass in person now that they have been vaccinated. With these new developments, the Catholic Diocese of Salt Lake City takes reasonable, safe, and prudent steps forward in our approach to the celebration of the Holy Mass and Sacraments, other liturgies, and ministry gatherings.

I hereby present the new Diocesan health and safety directives effective on the weekend on June 5-6, 2021, the Feast of the Body and Blood of Christ, as we continue to address the pandemic and our sacred commitment in protecting the life and safeguarding the health of the people of God.

Pastors must use their prudent discretion and consult their parish councils in implementing the Diocesan guidelines during these times in consideration of their respective local situations and other variables such as: the dimension of the church and the size of the parish community, the number of people coming to Mass, the kind of indoor gatherings with high number of people in attendance, the local county Health Department protocols, as well as the safety and health of the Clergy.

Many thanks to all my brother priests and other church ministers for their commitment in providing every possible spiritual outreach to the faithful during the pandemic and all the people of God for their patience, understanding and support. Some were not pleased, and a few were even angry with the decisions I made during the pandemic. However, these were necessary due to the unprecedented circumstances to protect life and safeguard the wellbeing of our community.

Let us work together mindful always of the responsibility for ourselves and for the health and safety of others with whom we interact at Church, at home and other places. We cannot let our guards down, but instead take all necessary measures to make our churches, parishes, schools, and other places safe places to gather, to worship and to celebrate events as a faith community.

Sunday Mass / Holy Day of Obligation and Liturgical Practices

The recent developments allow us to reconsider our Diocesan Guidelines in confronting the Coronavirus. As we move to some level of normalcy in many aspects of our lives, the time has finally arrived so we can go back to our normal practice of our faith. The Eucharist remains essential and the summit of our Christian lives and worship where we experience the living and saving presence of Christ and gather as one faith family.

While we realize that the pandemic is by no means over, it is important to reignite our faith in God, to celebrate again the Holy Mass, other Sacraments, and liturgical services in a reasonable and safe manner. Hence, here are the following updates:

- The Dispensation from Sunday Mass and Holydays of Obligation is lifted effective on the weekend on June 5-6, 2021 the Feast of the Body and Blood of Christ. The normal practice of our faith to “keep Holy the Lord’s Day” by coming to Mass each Sunday will once again be in effect, which includes the obligation to participate, in-person, in the celebration of Holy Mass each weekend for all who are able to do so.
- The dispensation still applies to those who are sick, elderly, homebound, experiencing great difficulties or other serious risks/concerns in coming to the Church. The dispensation does not relieve the faithful from their sacred duty to keep holy the Sabbath, so all are encouraged to spend time in prayer, thanksgiving, and rest on the Lord’s Day.
- Those who are sick, vulnerable or who care for others with underlying chronic health conditions, as well as those not feeling well, are encouraged to refrain from going to Church and remain at home. They are encouraged to watch and participate in livestreamed or televised Mass. You may call your Pastor and request to receive Holy Communion at home.
- In-person gatherings of the faithful in Church may resume with no size limits if the parish mitigates risk of exposure with physical distancing, the use of mask or facial covering and hand sanitizing/washing.
- Individual pastors may choose to dispense from or make optional the use of facial coverings in the Church given the circumstances of their local communities and the number of the faithful in attendance.
- Reasonable physical distancing for seating in the Church during Mass and other gatherings is recommended between unrelated groups or those not in the same household.
- Continue to offer live-streamed Masses for those who are unable to attend in person. Pastors may provide Holy Communion for those who wish to receive according to your parish situation.
- All parishes will observe the updated guidelines and follow all health and safety recommendations as outlined by local health authorities.

UPDATED Liturgical Practices

The following suspended liturgical practices over the last months may now be reinstated:

1. Entrance procession of Main Celebrant and ministers – servers and lector
 2. Offering of gifts and the passing of the collection basket by ushers with long handle
 3. Sign of peace through a gesture of a nod, bow, or simple hand wave
 4. Distribution of Holy Communion:
 - a. Priests and ministers should wear face coverings and sanitize their hands both before and after the distribution of Holy Communion.
 - b. Holy Communion will continue to be offered in the hand as the preferred practice.
 - c. Pastors may use their prudent discretion to distribute Holy Communion on the tongue at the communicant's discretion. Care should be taken by the ministers of Holy Communion to sanitize their hands in case they touched the communicant's tongue or saliva.
 - d. A designated station may be identified for those who wish to receive on the tongue after distributing Holy Communion in the hand. Sanitizing after each communion on the tongue is recommended at the discretion of the pastor.
 - e. Distribution of the Precious Blood remains suspended during the pandemic time.
 5. Parishes may continue to reinstate choirs and altar servers but in a manner that mitigates risk of spread of the virus (e.g., limited singers, physical distancing, use of facial coverings, etc.) where appropriate.
 6. Holy Water may be restored to smaller fonts at the doors but should be changed daily. Sanitize frequently the area around the fonts touched by the faithful.
 7. Parish Bulletin, Missalettes, hymnals and other materials in the pews may be made available using prudential judgement based on scientific finding that transmission of infection is through contact with droplets from the nose and mouth, not so much from touching any surface.
 8. Parishes should provide sanitizing stations in public areas and make masks available to assist in good hygiene and safety.
- Other Sacraments, such as Reconciliation/Confession and Baptism, ought to continue as usual, using prudential judgment regarding safety precautions.
 - Every attempt should be made to visit and anoint the sick at home or in the hospital in a manner that is safe for the visitor, the sick person, and other members of the household/staff. It is

important to respond promptly to emergency calls, visiting the sick and dying as a corporal act or work of mercy.

- Communion visits to the homebound by lay ministers or clergy may resume using prudential judgment and proper mitigation.
- These Guidelines will be modified upon the pastoral discretion of individual pastor as needed, and as circumstances change in the future.

Thank you for your priestly commitment and constant readiness to serve the People of God. Your ability to adapt and accommodate during these challenging times has shown the faithful your deep desire to help them encounter the Risen Lord in their lives. As we continue our spiritual journey and carry on our mission, may our Eucharistic Lord provide us the grace, strength, and perseverance to be able to share the Gospel of God's love to all people and to the ends of the earth.

KIND REMINDER

CLERGY ANNUAL RETREAT: June 7-11, 2021 at Homestead Resort, Midway UT

Our Clergy Annual Retreat is around the corner. I look forward to seeing everyone as we strive not only to foster our unity, solidarity and fraternity, but especially to attend to our ongoing spiritual development of molding our hearts and lives to be Christ-like.

Reflection: Retreat is one of the few opportunities for all brother priests to set aside a special time to pray TOGETHER as a presbyterate family. It is not just a bishop's mandate, but one of the major dimensions of priestly formation which formally began when we entered the seminary, as well as an integral part of our ongoing formation as priests. (*Program of Priestly Formation, USCCB; Apostolic Exhortation "Pastores Dabo Vobis," Pope John Paul II, 1992*).

"Our spiritual formation in the seminary set the foundation for our lifetime priestly ministry and spirituality" (PPF, 5th ed., par. 110). It does not end but continues after our ordination and is shaped by our continued progress and faithfulness to our spiritual life. It is a life-long process. Involving every aspect of our priestly lives and ministry. From the day of our ordination, we grow into priesthood progressively, just as we grow into personal holiness. This helps us understand that the spiritual formation for a priest is "the core which unifies and gives life to his *being* a priest and his *acting as* a priest" (*Pastores Dabo Vobis*, 45).

Furthermore, we all know that life-long learning or ongoing education is essential for adequate performance in almost or any occupation. This applies in our own lives and ministry.

Finally, ongoing spiritual formation is every priest's responsibility. We owe it to ourselves and to the people of God we serve to update ourselves to become more effective shepherds and ministers of the Gospel. Likewise, it is the bishop's responsibility to make it happen so priests are given the opportunity to grow in holiness. I need to do my job!!!!!! See you all soon!

- **HOLINESS OF LIFE**, our current Code of Canon Law, c. 276, §2, no. 4: the obligation of clerics for an annual retreat.
- "*We, the bishops of the United States, have heard the words of our Holy Father Pope John Paul II: "The entire particular Church has the responsibility, under the guidance of the Bishop, to develop and look after the different aspects of her priests' permanent formation" (PDV, no. 78). We understand, again in light of the Holy Father's words to us, that our responsibility for the ongoing formation of priests is rooted in our sacramental relationship with our respective presbyterates: "The Bishop's responsibility is based on the fact that priests receive their priesthood from him and share his pastoral solicitude for the People of God. He is responsible for ongoing formation, the purpose of which is to ensure that all his priests are generously faithful to the gift and ministry received, that they are priests such as the People of God wishes to have and has a 'right' to"* (PDV, no. 79).

ADDITION: PLEASE READ AND PROMOTE IN YOUR PARISH



**WORLDWIDE ANNUAL GLOBAL ROSARY
RELAY FOR THE SANCTIFICATION OF PRIESTS**

**Friday, June 11, 2021 , 4 P.M.
Cathedral of the Madeleine**

***Pray the Rosary, unite with your country.
and help encircle the world in prayer.***

*Worldpriest.com
Affirms Inspires Inform*

I invite the people of God of the Diocese of Salt Lake City to participate on the 12th Worldpriest Annual Global Rosary Relay for the Sanctification of Priests. The praying of the Rosary will take place at the Cathedral of the Madeleine on June 11, 2021 at 4pm, on the feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, when we encircle the world in prayer. It is now recognized as a truly significant and powerful devotional initiative within the Catholic Church to recognize and bless the work of priests serving the faithful the world over.

All our parishes and missions can join other participating prayer locations in over, seventy countries worldwide and pray a particular mystery of the Rosary assigned to our Diocese – the Glorious Mysteries - all at this designated time slot of half hour on the day in thanksgiving to God for our priests and to implore the protection and loving care of Our Lady, Mother of all priests, for all her priestly sons.

It was the great Irish priest Venerable Patrick Peyton who never tired of saying that *‘The Family that prays together stays together.’* As the family of the Church, let us join our prayers to the prayers of millions throughout the world on June 11, 2021:

- to raise our hearts to God for all priests in the exercise of their ministry
- that through our prayers, they will be blessed with God’s grace for their priesthood.
- that in this worldwide communion of prayer for them, they may experience our gratitude and support.
- and finally, that they will persevere in unity with Christ and his Church, and shepherd the Lord’s flock to the safe pastures of his Kingdom.

Invite your parishioners to either gather at the local-named participating prayer location. If unable to attend encourage your parishioners to join in from where they are located as the world gathers in prayer for all priests on Rosary Relay Day. Through all available communication, please inform your parishioners, place promotional posters on church and office notice boards to allow parishioners and staff the opportunity to join together or join prayerfully with their chosen prayer location local or worldwide.

Other Faiths, join in prayerfully from wherever you may be located to help unite the world in prayer. Individuals, take time out to pray. Check the online participation list so that you may travel to the nearest participating prayer location or pray at your home, in a beautiful location of your choosing or join with some friends. Make it a special prayer day.

At a participating prayer location, appoint a coordinator. Talk with them about how you could get involved; what help you could extend to spreading the good news locally of the Global Rosary Relay.

At school, teachers, have the children involved by praying the Rosary at their school by checking the online participating location list. Have the children download from www.worldpriest.com the beautiful pictures that can be colored in and given the local priests as a gift to say thank you and that you prayed for this priest. You may pray the allocated mystery the church is praying and pray whether alone or with a group of friends.

Lay organizations present World Priest's mission & history, as well as the Rosary Relay during various meetings. Download the information poster from www.worldpriest.com and email to all local prayer groups inviting them to get involved and promote this great day of prayer. By viewing the full list of participating shrines, you chose the location which is nearest to you and work from there to unite the world in prayer.