



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

DIOCESE OF WHEELING-CHARLESTON

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POST OFFICE BOX 230
WHEELING, WEST VIRGINIA 26003

September 17, 2021

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

I hope this email finds you well as we prepare to celebrate Catechetical Sunday, an opportunity to reflect on the role each person plays in passing on the faith to others. I want to send you some important reminders as we continue operating under the COVID-19 protocols set forth by the Diocese.

Masks: My request that all those entering our churches wear facial coverings is still in effect. To maintain consistency in parish life, **this request is also in effect for meetings, social events, or other parish gatherings (including bingo or events in which food is served).**

The masking protocols and hand-sanitizing before distributing Holy Communion and after each person receives the Eucharist on the tongue, put in place by the Diocese on August 17, 2021, also remain in effect for priests, deacons, and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion. I have attached that letter again for your reference.

No one should be turned away from celebrating the Eucharist, even if not wearing a mask, but priests and deacons should strongly encourage all who attend Mass to wear masks for others' and their own safety.

Cleaning/Sanitizing: The cleaning/sanitizing protocols detailed in the August 17, 2021, letter remain in effect until further notice. Churches should be sanitized at least once per day. Hand sanitizer and masks should be made available to people entering the church.

Social Distancing: Maintaining the protocols set forth by the Diocese on June 19, 2021, open seating in the church is now permitted. As with mask usage, special consideration should be given to those members of the faithful who wish to remain socially distanced at Mass. Pastors are encouraged to set aside a portion of the seating in the church to accommodate those who prefer to maintain physical distancing – in this section, only every other pew would be utilized and those seated in this section would need to wear masks and remain six-feet apart from others.

I know at times it seems that we are moving backward rather than forward as we continue dealing with this pandemic. Our state leads the nation in infection rates, COVID numbers continue to rise, and our hospitals remain at full capacity. While it may be difficult to accept inconvenient practices, I appreciate your willingness to take these steps to ensure the safety of all those who are entrusted to your care while we gather for worship and other parish activities.

May God continue to bless you in your ministry to the faithful in Wheeling-Charleston.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+Mark E. Brennan
Bishop of Wheeling-Charleston