



DIOCESE OF FORT WORTH

MEMORANDUM

To: Priests, Deacons, Center, Parish Staff

From: Very Reverend Jonathan Wallis, VG *JW*

Date: April 26, 2021

Subject: Revised COVID protocols

On March 2, 2021, Governor Abbott issued Executive Order Number GA-34, by which masks were no longer mandated in the State of Texas. We left our required health and safety protocols in place at that time out of an abundance of caution and to monitor how COVID-19 progressed in the wake of the absence of the mask mandate.

On April 9, 2021, we issued a memo that adapted the COVID-19 protocols given by Bishop Olson on September 25, 2020. The decision to make masks optional at Mass in certain counties was based upon data collected by the State of Texas and made available through the Texas Department of State Health Services. We would like to clarify that in that memo of April 9, 2021, our use of the term “herd immunity” was done so in a colloquial and not clinical way. To avoid confusion with various uses of the term “herd immunity” by public health officials, we will no longer use the term and apologize for any confusion this caused.

In the two months since Governor Abbott lifted the mask mandate state-wide, vaccination rates in the counties within our diocese have increased, while infection rates have decreased. As a result, we are further modifying our health and safety protocols.

Effective immediately, masks are now optional at Mass for all parishes within the Diocese of Fort Worth. Our protocols of enhanced cleaning, sanitizing between all Masses, requiring parishioners to sanitize their hands, and maintaining social distancing of at least three feet between individuals and/or families remain in place. Reception of Holy Communion is allowed either in the hand or on the tongue. All those distributing Holy Communion are to wear a mask. Pastors are free to establish how reception of Holy Communion will take place.

We encourage those who are not comfortable attending Mass in person at this time to stay home. Please be aware that Canon Law dispenses those from the obligation of attending Mass who feel that attendance would jeopardize their health. Anyone who is experiencing any symptoms of any illness should stay home from Mass.

We highly encourage all of the Faithful to receive the COVID-19 vaccine if they have not already done so.

In cooperation with County and State health officials, we will continue to monitor the infection rates from COVID-19 within our diocese. Parishes within any county in our diocese that becomes an “area with high hospitalizations” as defined by Executive Order Number GA-34 may return to the COVID-19 protocols established by Bishop Olson on September 25, 2020.

THE CATHOLIC CENTER