

COVID UPDATE from the DIOCESE of FALL RIVER

COVID-19 RESPONSE UPDATE August 1, 2021

Message for Parishes to Share with Parishioners

As most of you know, on Tuesday, July 27, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) announced a change to its mask-wearing guidance and now advises that fully vaccinated persons wear a mask in indoor public places, in areas of the country with “substantial and high” transmission of Covid-19. This is to reduce the risk of being infected with the more transmissible Delta variant of the virus and possibly spreading it to others.

Currently almost all territory of the Fall River Diocese lies in counties classified as either “substantial” or “high” areas of community transmission. In light of this, the Diocese of Fall River is strongly encouraging all parishioners to follow the CDC guidance and to wear a mask while attending Mass or any other liturgical celebration unless unable because of a medical condition or under the age of 2. This is particularly important for anyone with a weakened immune system; anyone at risk for severe disease because of age or underlying medical condition; or anyone in a household with someone having these conditions or with someone who is unvaccinated.

The recent uptick in virus transmission in some places is a reminder that the pandemic has not yet passed, and continued vigilance is required. Parishioners are asked to please keep in mind the need for a collective commitment to the overall good of the parish community.

The Diocese of Fall River continues to monitor all Covid-19 advisories and orders by both the CDC and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and will amend diocesan guidelines and directives on an ongoing basis as needed.

Reminder for Parish Administration To reduce the risk of transmission of the virus and to provide as safe an environment as possible, the following protocols and practices should be in place in all parishes in the Diocese:

- Priests, Deacons and Eucharistic Ministers should wear a mask during the distribution of Holy Communion.
- The distribution of the Precious Blood to the Faithful should remain suspended.
- Hand sanitizer should be used by all Ministers of Holy Communion before and after the distribution of Holy Communion.
- Hand sanitizer should be kept close at hand in case someone receives Holy Communion on the tongue. • Because of the proximity of penitent and priest in Confession, it is advisable for both to wear a mask.
- Sufficient hand sanitizing dispensers should be made available at the entrances of the church.
- Allow for proper ventilation and increased airflow and HVAC filtration when possible.
- Avoid unnecessary crowding at the entrances and aisles of the church whenever possible.
- Parishioners who have not been vaccinated and who are not from the same household should be encouraged to maintain physical distance from others in the pews.
- Masks should always be worn by those bringing Holy Communion to the sick and homebound.
- Parishes need to follow guidelines that are specific to their local municipality.