

CURRENT DIRECTIVES FOR THE PUBLIC CELEBRATION OF MASS,  
SACRAMENTS AND NON-RELIGIOUS EDUCATION  
(Effective September 10, 2021)

**Celebrant/all ministers:**

- Vaccinated or weekly testing. If not vaccinated, this should be made known to all present for their own decision to attend, and protection of themselves & families.
- Masks: All but celebrant, lector when reading, cantor when singing. Age 2 and below exempt.
- Social distancing: Highly encouraged.
- Capacity restriction: Recommended.
- Sanitizing shared surfaces: Recommended.
- Choir: If a choir is utilized, masked.
- Congregational singing: Suspension recommended.
- Homily length: Short is recommended to limit exposure to enclosed-space atmosphere.
- Sign of peace: Optional; suspension recommended.
- Communion: Both species allowed. On tongue allowed.
- Communion ministers: Vaccinated and masked.
- Holy water fonts: Allowed.
- Dispensation from attending weekly Mass: Remains; streaming and video-recorded/internet accessible Masses are HIGHLY recommended so as to serve the homebound or fearful.

**Anointing of the Sick/Last Rites**

- At the judgment of the priest. Should not be given to COVID patients.
- Pope Francis' dispensation/indulgence is still in place: [LINK](#)

Priests need to remember that while it may seem romantically heroic to minister to COVID patients, if they become ill, their parish may be without a priest at all.

**Other Non-Religious Education Gatherings**

- Masks: All. Age 2 and below exempt.
- Social distancing: Highly encouraged.
- Capacity restriction: Recommended.
- Sanitizing shared surfaces: Recommended.
- Singing: Suspension recommended.
- Office/parish staff: Fully vaccinated or weekly testing.

The virus behaves according to standard microbiological processes: the virus spreads through exhalations of airborne moisture from the infected to the inhalations of the non-infected. Masks mitigate this to an extent, so please have charity for others and wear a mask when among people; this has been recognized for well over 100 years (including during the Spanish flu pandemic). Incubation periods vary, and a person can be asymptomatic but very contagious, thus unwittingly endangering those with whom one comes in contact if standard precautions are not taken.

Vaccines, while not 100% effective, do appear to offer very significant protection from infection or mitigation of symptoms of the various variants, and all are encouraged to receive them. Vaccination has been highly encouraged by the Holy Father, the USCCB and Archbishop John C. Wester.

#### FAQs

**Q: Where's the scientific study that says that allowing only the celebrant, lector and cantor to be unmasked makes us safer? Don't restrict our prayer and singing!**

A: It's based on volume and exposure time—the same reason you won't get as wet in a sprinkling than you would in a downpour.

**Q: If masks worked, we wouldn't have the current situation.**

A: Masks work when used, even if not 100%; otherwise, why would surgeons, nurses and dentists utilize them in normal times? Also, one could argue that seatbelts don't work since fatal accidents can occur. The goal is to balance benefit with reasonable risks, aided by medical experts; it's almost impossible to eliminate all risk and still allow people to live/worship, which is essential to their mental and spiritual health.

School officials also take note of the requirements in the latest health order to ensure compliance.

Here is a [LINK](#) to the NM Department of Health for a more readable explanation of the severity of the current COVID situation.

Restrictions may increase/decrease according to the situation. Perhaps if all cooperate, we can minimize the duration of this surge with the fewest restrictions possible. While many feel that wearing masks and restrictions are an annoyance, annoyance is better than hospitalizations and funerals. Include in your prayers all who have already been infected and are struggling.