

MOST REVEREND
LOUIS F. KIHNEMAN, III
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FURTHER UPDATES TO THE DIOCESE OF BILOXI'S RESPONSE TO COVID-19

To the Clergy, Religious, and Lay Faithful of the Diocese of Biloxi:

Considering our current circumstances and Centers for Disease Control guidance, it now seems reasonable to withdraw the remaining dispensation from the obligation to personally participate in the celebration of Mass. Effective on the Vigil of Pentecost, May 22, 2021, the obligation to assist at Holy Mass resumes as it was prior to the pandemic.

Nevertheless, on a case-by-case basis, parishioners who are particularly concerned about their own or a family member's vulnerability may approach their Pastor for a one-week dispensation, renewable as the Pastor determines appropriate. As a rule, those physically unable to come to Mass, those who are ill, those whose health would be endangered by their presence at Mass, or those caring for someone whose health would be endangered, are not bound to physically participate in Mass.

Moreover, as of May 22, the following also apply (many of these are a result of findings that surface transmission of COVID-19 is rare):

- Following CDC guidelines if you are fully vaccinated, masks are no longer required. Masks are recommended for vulnerable persons and especially for those who are not yet vaccinated.
- The provision of hand sanitizer for everyone entering the church may be continued as needed.
- Pastors should make a reasonable attempt to provide some seating that can be socially distanced, especially if requested.
- Holy water may be returned to holy water fonts/stoups. These should be cleaned more regularly than in the past.
- Worship aids and hymnals can be returned to pews.
- Choirs may resume ordinary singing. If members are closely seated and some are not vaccinated, they should wear masks between songs.
- For the collection, members of the congregation may pass baskets among themselves.
- The Sign of Peace may be shared with a handshake—or some other sign as individuals prefer.
- When distributing Holy Communion, Ministers should continue to wear masks that cover the mouth and nose and sanitize their hands before distribution.

- Congregational reception of the Precious Blood continues to be suspended for the time being.
- Bulletins may be distributed.
- Pews do not need to be routinely sanitized between every Mass.
- With the Pastor's prudent planning, parish celebrations, events, and activities may resume.

A Pastor may temporarily return to some of the previous COVID-19 cautionary provisions if the virus or a variant changes the situation on the ground.

I again encourage the faithful who are eligible to receive a COVID-19 vaccine.

Please be assured of my prayers.

Given at the Pastoral Center of the Diocese of Biloxi on May 19, A.D. 2021.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Louis Kihneman". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

Most Reverend Louis F. Kihneman
Bishop of Biloxi