

Dear Parishioner,

May 14, 2021

It has been a while since my last communication with you on updates about the restrictions and guidelines for the covi-19 pandemic. Since then we have heard a lot from counties either moving up or down from Lower Risk to extreme Risk. As it was announced yesterday by Governor Kate Brown who based herself on the guidelines issued by CDC that the requirement of wearing masks for those who are fully vaccinated is no longer needed. Today the Archbishop issued the following statement and policy for the Parishes to observe as follows:

Following new guidance issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Governor announced yesterday that fully vaccinated Oregonians no longer need to wear masks or social distance in most public spaces.

Effective immediately, churches in western Oregon can allow fully vaccinated people to attend Masses and faith gatherings without wearing masks or social distancing.

Pastors will still need to set aside space in churches for those who are not fully vaccinated and are required to wear masks and maintain 6 feet of distance between households.

The faithful should be instructed that the eased restrictions will be implemented on the honor system. Those who present themselves without masks to attend church, are affirming they are fully vaccinated. Keep in mind that some people who are fully vaccinated may want to mask and socially distance at church. They are welcome to do so.

One is fully vaccinated when at least two weeks have passed from the second shot of the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines (and one shot of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine). No verbal, written, or other verification of full vaccination should be attempted. It is not required.

Those who are not fully vaccinated are still to be equally welcomed and encouraged to attend Masses and gatherings. No sense of discrimination should be experienced by those not fully vaccinated. Toward this end it may be best to designate one side of the church for those fully vaccinated and the other side for those unvaccinated to avoid one group being relegated to the back of the church.

Percentage of capacity limits for churches (previously at 50% per my directive) are no longer in force.

I recommend that priests and ministers who are fully vaccinated still wear masks during distribution of Holy Communion at Mass, but this is not a requirement. I also recommend that all greeters and ushers continue to wear masks. Each pastor has the discretion to determine the policy for his parish.

Please continue to accommodate those with medical concerns that prevent mask-wearing (who are not fully vaccinated) in a separate space such as a cry room or choir loft.

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For us at Immaculate Heart Parish I recommend that we start observing these policies as stipulated by the Archbishop this Sunday. There will be no limit number of people in the church other than what is set by the Fire Marshal which is 250.