



DIOCESE *of* GAYLORD

DATE: May 14, 2021
TO: Priests, Directors of Parish Life, Deacons, Parish Staff, Diocesan Staff
FROM: Most Reverend Walter A. Hurley + *Walter C. Hurley*
RE: **Updates to COVID-19 Protocols for Liturgical Celebrations**

Today, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) announced updated COVID-19 guidelines parallel to that of the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). These changes go into effect tomorrow, Saturday, May 15, at 9 A.M.

Therefore, the following changes become effective as soon as parishes can implement them:

- **Masks are no longer required during liturgical celebrations.** It is expected that those who are not vaccinated follow CDC guidance and wear a mask for the safety of fellow parishioners.
- **Social distancing is no longer required during liturgical celebrations.** Rope/tape can be removed from your church's pews. Church seating capacity has no limit, however, space in the church should be set aside to accommodate those who wish to continue social distancing, as you are able to do so.
- **Do not ask parishioners to reveal their vaccination status.**
- You should expect a move towards the **lifting of the dispensation from attending Mass, effective the weekend of May 29-30, 2021**, except for those with serious reasons for not attending.

We continue to thoroughly review these updated guidelines and will provide further details to our diocesan protocols early next week.

This weekend, and in the immediate term, we can expect that there may be variations from parish to parish in the implementation of these guidelines; I trust you will implement them as soon as feasible for you and your parish's particular circumstances.

+WAH