

Diocese of Austin

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Office of the Bishop

March 5, 2021

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

This week Governor Greg Abbott issued a new executive order related to COVID-19, effective March 10, 2021, which rescinds his previous statewide mandate requiring face coverings. This order also allows for 100% capacity in most businesses. While rescinding the statewide mandate for the “wearing of a face covering,” the governor encourages all Texans to continue using face masks “wherever it is not feasible to maintain six feet of social distancing.”

The temporary protocols for the celebration of the sacraments in the Diocese of Austin remain in effect. Rest assured that my decision today is made through prayer and in consultation with priests, deacons, laity and medical professionals. As I have stated multiple times since the onset of this pandemic, my decisions are based on the gospel value of the sanctity and protection of human life and the Church contributing to the common good of society.

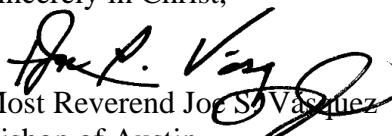
Throughout the pandemic, I have issued protocols to ensure that the sacraments remain both available and safe for the people of God. These protocols encourage parishioners to wear face masks, receive Holy Communion in the hand, distance safely between households at Mass, and monitor their own health prior to attending Mass. In addition, our parishes are required to provide hand sanitizer as well as sanitize the pews in between Masses. By practicing these protocols, I believe the people of the Diocese of Austin have made a significant contribution to the physical and spiritual health of Central Texas and I am grateful.

It brings me great hope that vaccines are available. As more people are vaccinated, I believe this will bring us to a place where we will be able to safely modify the protocols, giving more freedom at our liturgies and parish activities. My request to all Catholics in the Diocese of Austin is that we stay the course in preparation for the time when this pandemic is no longer dangerous to the health of society.

Finally, I am inspired by the incredible generosity that has maintained each parish through this difficult financial period, as well as the generous support of the Catholic Services Appeal and Encountering Christ Campaign. Because of your sacrifices we will continue to provide for the pastoral and ministerial needs in the Diocese of Austin.

I entrust the Diocese to the intercession of St. Joseph, patron of the Universal Church! Together, we will overcome this pandemic, recalling in hope the words of Christ who proclaims, “Behold, I make all things new” (Rev. 21:5).

Sincerely in Christ,


Most Reverend Joe S. Vasquez
Bishop of Austin