

# Bishop McElroy Lifts Restrictions

On June 17, Bishop Robert McElroy lifted all the restrictions that the Catholic Diocese of San Diego had imposed in the last 15 months to slow the spread of the pandemic, effective immediately.

In a letter to priests, the Bishop said he was acting after weighing the current state of public health, recent changes in state and county regulations, and after consultations with Auxiliary Bishops John Dolan and Ramón Bejarano and the priest leadership of the diocese.

Specifically, Bishop McElroy:

- Made masks optional at Mass and other diocesan functions, but noted that the CDC recommends people who are not vaccinated continue to wear them;
- Lifted all of the restrictions on capacity and spacing for worship;
- Lifted all limitations on meetings and social activities;
- Resumed distribution of the Eucharist on the tongue, although it will continue to be available in the hand. The reintroduction of the shared cup will be determined sometime in the future.
- Announced that the dispensation from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass will end on July 1. Some members will continue to be exempt, however.
- Recommended that non-family members bringing the Eucharist to the sick be vaccinated.

Children under the age of 14 in formation classes and students in Catholic schools will have to continue to wear masks because there is no vaccine yet available for the bulk of these youngsters.

He called for an end to changes to liturgical spaces and practices adopted during the pandemic but left the timing and details up to local pastors.

Bishop McElroy ended his letter thanking the diocese's priests.

"God's grace has accompanied our local church in many ways during this enormously challenging period," he wrote, "but no contribution has surpassed that of our priests in proclaiming the saving presence of the Crucified and Risen Christ in our midst."