Archdiocese Covid-19 Update

February 9, 2022 Churches In Lake County & Most of Suburban Cook County Moving to Mask- Optional

The COVID Task Force and Archdiocese of Chicago leadership have continued to assess the evolving situation regarding mask requirements at the state and local levels, declining infection rates in many of our communities, and guidance from health departments. In light of this progress there are several updates to share.

Masks

Beginning Thursday, February 10, archdiocesan churches and chapels in Lake and Suburban Cook Counties (excluding Oak Park and Evanston) can move to mask-optional for all Masses, liturgies and Religious Education classes. The City of Chicago, Oak Park, and Evanston Health Departments currently have standing orders requiring masks applicable to Masses, liturgies and Religious Ed classes. We will continue to follow these orders in those municipalities while they are in effect. This mirrors the guidance provided to archdiocesan schools, as well.

To be clear, archdiocesan and parish offices, including parish halls and social gathering places, must wait until the governor's current statewide mask order is lifted on February 28 before moving to a mask-optional environment. Even then, some municipalities may still have standing orders requiring masks. We will continue to monitor developments in those jurisdictions and communicate updates accordingly.

As we transition to mask-optional, please note the following:

- Parishioners and Religious Education families should be reminded to report any COVID positive cases (instances when the individual has been on parish property within 48 hours of symptoms or positive diagnosis) to the parish office so that appropriate communication can be shared with any close contacts.
- Everyone is encouraged to vaccinate, boost when eligible, and wear masks, if preferred. N95 masks are highly effective at preventing transmission of COVID regardless of whether the wearer is around masked or unmasked individuals. We support everyone in whichever decision they make regarding the regular use of masks.
- Our isolation and quarantine protocols are not changing. As such, even in a mask-optional environment, anyone – regardless of vaccination status – must isolate if they are symptomatic or test positive. Unvaccinated close contacts must quarantine. In addition, those people coming out of isolation or quarantine must wear a mask for an additional five days per CDC guidance.
- Masks may be required during periods of high community infection. We will continue to assess current trends and based on infection levels, we may require churches to temporarily require masks once again in the future.

Food and Beverage

All restrictions on food and beverage are lifted effective immediately. Continue to use prudence with respect to buffet-style spreads (individually prepared items remain preferred), self-service and shared utensils, the availability of hand sanitize, etc.

Lent and Holy Week Directives Coming Soon

In light of the evolving situation surrounding mask mandates and the potential for other changes at the state and/or local level, the Task Force and Office for Divine Worship are developing an update to guidance for Lent and Holy Week to be issued next week.