

Guidelines for Public Masses During the COVID-19 Pandemic

September 27, 2021



The Diocese of Scranton joyfully welcomes the faithful of the Diocese of Scranton to return to Masses at all its parishes. Despite the challenges of the last year, we invite those who have not yet returned to Mass to rejoin us in person to celebrate the Holy Eucharist, the source and summit of the Christian life.

On Monday, September 27th, our Most Revered Bishop released updated information concerning the Diocesan Guidelines for Public Masses During the Covid-19 Pandemic. I take this opportunity to share these updated guidelines with you.

1. MASK USAGE STRONGLY RECOMMENDED DURING MASS

The Diocese of Scranton continues to strongly recommend that all parishioners wear a mask while attending Mass, regardless of their vaccination status. While there has been great disparity between parishes in mask usage among the faithful – mask wearing remains an important mitigation tool against community spread.

The Bishop strongly encourage parishes to continue to stress the importance of mask wearing in whatever ways possible.

Again, we encourage the reception of Holy Communion in the hand rather than orally during the time of the pandemic. You are also strongly asked to not socially gather inside the Church prior to or after the celebration of Mass. Your kind attention to these items would be most appreciated.

We **STRONGLY ENCOURAGE** our Parishioners who are sick or running a fever to Stay Home from daily or weekend Masses if these conditions persist.

2. MASK USAGE AND DISTANCING FOR IN-PERSON FAITH FORMATION PROGRAMS

With our Faith Formation Program just beginning, as a reminder, **masks are required for all students and teachers regardless of vaccination status.** The Pennsylvania Department of Health issued an order directing face coverings for school entities. The Pennsylvania Catholic Conference has advised us that this order covers religious education classes – thus strengthening our original rationale for the mask mandate.

In addition to masks, we will maintain at least three feet of distancing between students while in a classroom setting.

3. We **STRONGLY ENCOURAGE** Sick Students to Stay Home from Religious Education Classes.



Part of our Partnership in Sharing Good Health means teachers, staff and students/parents should review this Screening Tool at home each day prior to coming to a Diocesan Catholic School or faith formation class or a Parish Church for the celebration of Mass or other services. This home screening assessment is important to help ensure everyone’s safety.

Diocese of Scranton School/Faith Formation Symptom Screening Tool

Part I: If you answer “yes” to questions 1, 2, or 3, please contact your school/parish faith formation director prior to sending your child to school. As a Parishioner, if you answer “YES” to questions 1,2,3, please refrain from attending daily or Sunday Mass.

1. Are you (a parishioner)/is the student taking any medication to treat or reduce a fever such as Ibuprofen (i.e. Advil, Motrin) or Acetaminophen (Tylenol)?
2. Have you traveled to an area with travel restrictions or a very high level of transmission?
3. Have you/your child been in close contact with someone diagnosed with COVID-19 in the last 10 days or told by the Department of Health that you/your child should quarantine?

Part II

1. Are you/is the student experiencing any of the following?

Group A 1 or more symptoms	Group B 2 or more symptoms
Fever (100.4 or higher) Cough (New and persistent) Shortness of breath Difficulty breathing	Sore throat Runny nose/congestion Chills New lack of smell or taste Muscle pain Nausea or Vomiting Headache Diarrhea

Stay home if, you or the student:

- Have one or more symptoms in Group A **OR**
- Have two or more symptoms in Group B **OR**
- Are taking fever reducing medication **OR**
- Are within a window for recommended quarantine