



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

## DIOCESE OF WHEELING-CHARLESTON

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February 24, 2022

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston has implemented a number of protocols designed to keep members of the faithful, volunteers, and clergy members safe and healthy.

These protective measures have worked well as to this date there have been no traceable outbreaks due to Catholic Masses throughout the state. This is a testament to the hard work you have done to protect yourself and others. I thank you.

We have worked closely with health officials in our state and nation. As their guidance has changed, so too can our protocols. In adherence to those updated guidelines from health officials, the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston advises parishioners that masking is now optional at all of our churches throughout the Diocese.

We must remember to be respectful of others' choices and be sensitive to those who continue to make use of facial coverings.

The following masking protocols remain in place for priests, deacons, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion:

1. Priests, deacons and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion must both sanitize their hands before distributing the Body of Christ and wear masks while distributing the Sacrament. They must also sanitize their hands after giving Holy Communion to a person on the tongue before moving to the next communicant. Masking must also be used when administering other Sacraments in which close contact is required as well. Ministers must wear masks during the distribution of ashes on Ash Wednesday.
2. Priests and deacons should wear masks if altar servers are close to them (e.g., holding the missal for the opening and closing prayers).

All other protocols put in place by the Diocese on June 11, 2021, (linked [here](#)) remain in effect.

We will continue to monitor this situation and discern future direction that we may safely celebrate the Eucharist together. Let us continue to offer our prayers for an end to this pandemic—that God will spare the loss of more lives and the serious illness of others.

Sincerely in Christ,

+Mark E. Brennan

Bishop of Wheeling-Charleston