



Archdiocese of Santa Fe

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Effective Friday, February 18, 2022

Archbishop John C. Wester and the COVID-19 Response Team have issued the following revised protocols during the current COVID-19 Pandemic:

[PROTOCOLOS ADICIONALES DE COVID-19
\(CUARESMA, UNCIÓN DE LOS ENFERMOS, CONFIRMACIONES, CLASES DE EDUCACIÓN
RELIGIOSA\)](#)

Current Restrictions

1. From this day forward, masks will be optional in church. However, they remain strongly recommended, especially for those over 65, those with medical conditions that make them more vulnerable to the virus, those caring for persons in the previous two categories, and those who are unvaccinated.
2. Eucharistic Ministers must wear a mask while distributing Holy Communion. They should also sanitize their hands just before distribution.
3. Choir members may sing without masks. The limit of 8 to 10 choir members allowed to sing at Mass is no longer in force. The other choir protocols (such as 3 to 4 feet for social distancing, sterilization of the choir area, no sharing of music, the use of electronic tablets instead of paper music, and no sharing of paper music if used) are still advised. The congregation is also allowed to sing.
4. The Sunday Mass obligation remains suspended. There is no obligation to attend Sunday Mass in church until further notice.
5. Those whose age and/or medical condition render them more vulnerable to the virus are recommended to pray at home on Sunday, preferably taking advantage of live-streamed Masses.
6. The Catholic Schools Office has lifted the requirement to wear masks at school. The schools will continue to encourage safety protocols, such as covering mouth when coughing and sneezing, washing hands, and continuing with the regular disinfecting of facilities. Parents have the option to have their children wear masks. Teachers and staff will also have the option to wear masks. In order to protect students and staff, those exhibiting symptoms will be sent home.
7. While there is a definite reduction in the number of COVID-19 cases, we are still in a moment of transition and there is much that we do not know. The faithful are strongly encouraged to observe those protocols that reduce the possibility of infection. It is prudent to err on the side of caution and to be safe rather than sorry. If you are sick, stay home!

8. Please continue to pray for those who have contracted the COVID-19 virus and pray for a swift end to the pandemic.

Lent

Ash Wednesday

Ashes may be distributed in the usual manner. Ministers who are distributing ashes must wear a mask. It is no longer necessary to use a swab for each person. Several Liturgies of the Word may be scheduled to diminish numbers at each celebration. Small packets of ashes may be prepared for families.

Passion (Palm Sunday)

Any of the three forms for the initial gathering with palms and the subsequent procession may be used.

Holy Thursday

The washing of feet (Mandatum) may take place in the usual manner.

The procession of the Blessed Sacrament to the adoration chapel after Mass is allowed.

Good Friday

During the adoration of the cross, only the priest will kiss the figure of Jesus. The faithful shall be instructed to come forward, bow in front of the cross without kissing it and then return to their pews.

Easter Vigil

The blessing of the fire and the placing of symbols on the Paschal Candle and the subsequent procession with candles into the church may take place as usual. Due to the length of time of the vigil Mass, the faithful should be strongly encouraged to wear face masks.

Penance Services during Lent

At the pastor's discretion, the third form of the Rite of Reconciliation may be used.

Pilgrimages

Pilgrimages to the shrine at Chimayó and Tomé Hill may proceed as usual.

Anointing of the Sick/Last Rites

Priests are advised to use their discretion while anointing the sick. Given the reduced immune systems of those who are ill, priests should wear their masks while anointing the sick in the home. As always, hospitals, convalescent homes, and assisted living facilities will have their own protocols that must be followed. Please see the indulgences available for the sick and

dying as provided by the Holy See the current pandemic at this [LINK](#).

Confirmations

Confirmations shall proceed as normal. Archbishop John C. Wester, Father Glenn Jones, Monsignor Lambert Luna, Father Oscar Coehlo, and perhaps other designated priests will confirm according to the schedule.

Other Non-Religious Education Gatherings

- Masks: Optional.
- Social distancing: Highly encouraged.
- Capacity restriction: Recommended.
- Sanitizing shared surfaces: Recommended.
- Singing: Allowed.
- Office/parish staff: Fully vaccinated or weekly testing.

The virus behaves according to standard microbiological processes: the virus spreads through exhalations of airborne moisture from the infected to the inhalations of the non-infected. Masks mitigate this to an extent (see [LINK](#)); this has been recognized for well over 100 years (including during the Spanish flu pandemic). Incubation periods vary, and a person can be asymptomatic but very contagious, thus unwittingly endangering those with whom one comes in contact if standard precautions are not taken.

Vaccines, while not 100% effective, do appear to offer very significant protection from infection or mitigation of symptoms of the various variants, and all are encouraged to receive them. Vaccination has been highly encouraged by the Holy Father, the USCCB and Archbishop John C. Wester.

FAQs

Q: Where's the scientific study that says that allowing only the celebrant, lector and cantor to be unmasked makes us safer? Don't restrict our prayer and singing!

A: It's based on volume and exposure time—the same reason you won't get as wet in a sprinkling than you would in a downpour.

Q: If masks worked, we wouldn't have the current situation.

A: Masks work when used, even if not 100%; otherwise, why would surgeons, nurses, and dentists utilize them in normal times? Also, one could argue that seatbelts don't work since fatal accidents can occur. The goal is to balance benefit with reasonable risks, aided by medical experts; it's almost impossible to eliminate all risk and still allow people to live/worship, which is essential to their mental and spiritual health.

School officials also take note of the requirements in the latest health order to ensure compliance.

Restrictions may increase/decrease according to the situation. Perhaps if all cooperate, we can minimize the duration of this surge with the fewest restrictions possible. While many feel that wearing masks and restrictions are an annoyance, annoyance is better than hospitalizations and funerals. Include in your prayers all who have already been infected and are struggling.