



corona@rcab.org

Archdiocese of Boston

Update to COVID Protocols

August 26, 2021

What follows is an update to the Archdiocesan protocols with regard to COVID safety measures. It is to be seen as a complement to the Catholic Schools Office directives issued on August 25, 2021. These measures take effect on the weekend of Labor Day (September 4 and 5).

The Archdiocese of Boston will remain closely in touch with Governor Baker's office, and will adjust these protocols, if necessary, in response to any change in the State mandates.

Regarding Safety Precautions at Masses

- All parishes are mandated to have clearly marked, clearly communicated, and clearly enforced areas of the Church for people who want to wear masks and be sitting only near people who are wearing masks.
- Pastors are urged to encourage (but not require) all participants in Parish activities to wear masks.
- Priests, deacons, and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion should wear masks during the distribution of Communion and should disinfect their hands prior to the distribution.
- Pastors should clearly communicate the state advisory that all unvaccinated people are advised to wear masks indoors.
- **Many municipalities within the Archdiocese of Boston are now requiring all people, regardless of vaccination status, to wear masks indoors in public places. If the local community has that requirement, the parishes in that community must comply. Note that in the City of Boston, houses of worship have been exempted from that mandate.**

Parishes in the City of Boston are encouraged, but not required, to mandate masks.

Regarding Faith Formation:

At this time parishes are encouraged to delay or suspend in-person gatherings for faith formation and youth ministry until after October 1, when hopefully the spread of COVID in the state will have abated.

In parishes that do hold in-person gatherings for faith formation and youth ministry between now and October 1, all participants are required to wear masks, as long as they are at least five years old. Masks are not required for children under 2 and are at the discretion of the parents for children aged 2 to 5.

In any case, we encourage parishes to continue to offer on-line faith formation and youth ministry opportunities, and/or to make use of parish and diocesan supported home based programs such as Project Nazareth.

Parishes will not be allowed to require in-person attendance at faith formation and youth ministry programming this year as a condition for receiving First Holy Communion or Confirmation or for any other reason.

Regarding Reporting

If a parish staff member, or a priest or deacon, is diagnosed with COVID, the Archdiocese of Boston must be notified immediately, through the corona@rcab.org email address.

The parish will be instructed in who must quarantine, and how communication with the parish needs to be handled.

If a parishioner reports having attended a Mass and then testing positive for COVID very soon after, an announcement should be made on the parish's website, not disclosing any information about the parishioner, but informing the parish that a person was at that Mass who then tested positive for COVID.

This information can be found at <http://rcabrisk.org>

Regarding Vaccinations

The Archdiocese of Boston, following the example of the Cardinal and the Holy Father, continues to urge vaccination as the most effective way to bring this pandemic under control and keep families safe.