



CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF  
**PITTSBURGH**  
NEWS

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### **Diocese of Pittsburgh updates COVID-19 directives for parishes and schools**

The Catholic Diocese of Pittsburgh will take preliminary steps to ease COVID restrictions in schools and parishes while remaining committed to protecting everyone's health and safety.

Beginning in parishes on Saturday, February 26 and in diocesan elementary and high schools on Monday, February 28, masks will not be required, except in limited circumstances.

"For more than two years, the leaders in our parishes and schools have worked diligently to protect themselves, each other, and our community from COVID-19," said Bishop David Zubik. "We have learned to create safe environments and to quickly adapt when outbreaks require us to exercise greater caution. We thank God that local infections have dropped and pray that our anticipated adjustments will be the first of many steps toward resuming ways of worship and learning that we have all missed so much."

Effective for parishes on Saturday, February 26:

- Priests, deacons and liturgical ministers in the sanctuary as well as ushers and greeters will no longer be obligated to wear masks at Mass.
- Parishioners will again be invited to share the Sign of Peace.
- Laity can present the gifts of bread and wine used for consecration.
- The distribution of Precious Blood from the cup remains suspended at this time.
- All parish events outside of Mass may be held in-person. Livestream options for Mass and activities will continue for those who are unable to attend in person.

Effective for schools on Monday, February 28, masks will no longer be required.

- However, masking will continue on school buses, as required by federal law.
- Masks will also be required for anyone who has tested positive for COVID-19 for five days after their return to work or school.

The number of new cases of COVID has been steadily dropping in our area, and positive cases have declined in diocesan parishes and schools. Waiting until the end of February to implement these changes allows time for cases to decline further, for hospital staffing levels to improve, and for more people to receive vaccinations.

As always, if the number of positive cases surges in a specific county—or within a specific parish or school—mitigation measures, including mandatory masking, may be reinstated.

Bishop Zubik joins Pope Francis in urging everyone who is eligible to get COVID vaccines and booster shots as an act of love for all people, especially the most vulnerable.

“Getting vaccinated is a sign of our concern for our neighbors. It should be done out of love for our Lord who told us to care for the health of others,” Bishop Zubik said.

The CDC, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and local health officials continue to advise masking at indoor gatherings, especially for those who are unvaccinated or have certain medical conditions. Based on their age, health history, and family considerations, parishioners and school families must make prudent decisions to avoid catching or spreading the disease. Anyone who is sick, feels at risk, is a primary caregiver, or has serious anxiety about being part of a large group at this time is excused from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass and may have remote learning opportunities available.

The Diocese of Pittsburgh has 70 parishes, 29 elementary schools, and 7 high schools spanning Allegheny, Beaver, Butler, Greene, Lawrence and Washington counties.