

DIOCESE OF SALT LAKE CITY
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OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

MEMORANDUM

DATE: February 14, 2022

TO: All Clergy, Religious, Seminarians, Principals, Religious Education Directors and Diocesan Staff
FROM: Most Reverend Oscar A. Solis, Bishop of Salt Lake City
WHAT: Diocesan Mask Mandate UPDATE

Dear Faithful and Friends of the Diocese of Salt Lake City,

On January 31, 2022, I extended the Covid-19 protocols regarding mask-wearing for a two-week period, until February 15, 2022. After reviewing the scientific data available and in consultation with my Senior Staff and regional Deans, I hereby lift the present mask mandate effective **February 15, 2022**, for our Parishes and other similar institutions (except for Catholic Schools). A similar lifting of a masking mandate in our Catholic Schools will become effective on March 1, 2022.

Specifically:

- Wearing of masks in large indoor groupings remains **HIGHLY RECOMMENDED**, but **NO LONGER MANDATED**. In consideration of the elderly, the vulnerable and those who suffer comorbidity and other underlying health issues, charity for the common good always comes first, rather than individual freedom.
- Social distancing continues to be encouraged, as each individual setting and local circumstances allow. Kindly follow the recommendations of local authorities and leaders (pastors, administrators, principals, teachers, etc.)
- All Catholics and visitors to our Churches and institutions who qualify continue to be strongly encouraged to be fully vaccinated, which includes booster shots and soon, children 6 months and older.
- On a separate, but related, issue: for Ash Wednesday (March 2, 2022), the faithful who wish to receive ashes as the traditional ritual of Lenten repentance, will be given the option of receiving them in the traditional manner of imposition on the forehead or in the more ancient tradition of having the ashes sprinkled on the top of their heads (thus avoiding being touched). If sprinkling is preferred over touching, simply bow your head forward when receiving the ashes. All ministers of the ashes are asked to wear masks.

It is our hope that, now as our COVID-19 case numbers and hospitalizations continue to drop, we will be able to give our pastors, administrators, principals, and other executives more autonomy and management of their safety protocols. I will continue meeting regularly with my senior staff and regional deans to discuss evolving safety protocols for our diocese, review hospitalization rates and overall case numbers and make changes or adjustment to our protocols accordingly.

Praying for your health and safety and with wishes of God's abundant blessings during these challenging times and I remain,

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+Bishop Oscar A. Solis