



## MEMORANDUM

To: All Priests; All Parishes  
From: Father Robert Hughes, V.G.  
Date: January 6, 2022  
RE: **A Reminder about COVID-19 Protocols**

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The Bishop's Office is once again receiving phone calls and emails from an increasing number of parishes about the protocols for safeguarding the faithful during the COVID-19 pandemic. Pastors with their parish staffs need to be aware that the Omicron variant is causing a surge at this time throughout New Jersey. Please review your COVID-19 protocols.

**BEGINNING AT THE VIGIL MASS FOR SUNDAY, JANUARY 9<sup>th</sup>** – parishioners should be encouraged to wear masks while attending Mass. If a pastor wishes, those who chose to not wear a mask may be asked to sit in particular places in the church which are so marked. Priests, deacons and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion **are required to wear a mask which covers their mouth and nose** whenever they distribute Holy Communion and to use hand sanitizer before and after distribution. Social distancing should be practiced where possible. Holy Water may be retained, but parish staff should make sure to change the water frequently.

There are **NO current limits** for attendance at Mass.

All parish meetings/gatherings that take place indoors are **limited to the number that can be present while maintaining** all social distancing protocols. In addition, **all participants are expected to wear masks which cover their nose and mouth** for the duration of the meeting. If someone is unable to do so for health reasons – they must be reminded to keep a greater than six-foot distance from other participants.

**While there is no prohibition on offering hospitality** – best practices suggest that buffets and beverage centers should be limited.

**Frequently touched surfaces** should be sanitized on a regular basis. Parishioners should be asked to sanitize the bathroom after they use it or the parish may choose to have facilities staff available to do so.