

UPDATE REGARDING COVID-19 PROTOCOLS

As the vaccine roll out continues across the country, the State of Georgia has relaxed restrictions in public places with regard to capacity requirements and social distancing measurements (please see *Guidance for In-Person Operations* at <https://www.georgia.org/covidfaq>). While the Diocesan guidelines for Sunday Mass attendance¹ will continue for the time being, all parishes will soon begin implementing the next phase of reopening protocols.

Pastors may use their discretion as to when these protocols will go into effect at each parish. It is expected that all parishes will be fully open by the first day of the 2021-2022 school year: August 9, 2021.

Let us move forward in unity and hope, confident in God's help.

NEW PANDEMIC PROTOCOLS

The following protocols may be observed in the Diocese of Savannah beginning **Pentecost Sunday, May 23, 2021**:

- Tape and ropes marking off pews may be removed. It is recommended that those attending Mass continue to maintain at least three feet of distance between households. Each individual and household should take personal responsibility for their decisions and show respect for others.
- The wearing of masks inside churches and other parish buildings is encouraged.
- At the discretion of the local Pastor, Holy Water may be re-introduced at the entrances of the church. If Holy Water is present, it should be refreshed on a regular (a few times per week) basis.
- At the discretion of the local Pastor, hymnals may be placed in the pews. Handling and use of the hymnal is a decision left to the individual.
- Hand sanitizer should be made available at church entrances.
- Ushers and greeters should refrain from shaking hands as people enter.
- The Offertory Procession should take place.
- Altar servers should return to their pre-pandemic responsibilities.
- The collection may be gathered utilizing baskets with extended handles.
- The Sign of Peace should take place with the invitation: *Let us offer one another a gesture of peace* or a simple acknowledgment of peace.
- Ministers of Holy Communion are encouraged to wear a mask and sanitize their hands before distribution.
- The faithful should not be denied the reception of Holy Communion on the tongue.
- The distribution of the Precious Blood to the faithful remains suspended.
- After-Mass fellowship may take place with individually wrapped food items and the observation of social distancing protocols as noted above.



DIOCESE OF SAVANNAH

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¹ As of November 29, 2020, the dispensation from Sunday Mass attendance is granted only for the following: those who belong to vulnerable populations due to age or health; caregivers and those who live with those in vulnerable populations; those who are sick or have symptoms; and those who suffer from extreme uneasiness or anxiety from being in any public places in this time of pandemic.