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*Cathedral Square Plaza*

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

**To: Priests**

**From: Bishop Edward C. Malesic**

**Date: 25 February 2022**

**Re: An update from Bishop Malesic on keeping people safe against the COVID-19 virus**

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Data indicates that the rates of infection of the COVID-19 virus are rapidly dropping in our area and will continue to drop. As a result, local health care systems are lessening operational restrictions. Consequently, after consultation with local medical experts and a review of the latest information from public health officials, I offer these revised guidelines.

1. Signs may be removed from the church regarding the request to wear masks.
2. The mandate requiring masks to be worn during the distribution of Holy Communion is lifted.
3. Distribution of the Precious Blood to the congregation remains prohibited until further notice.
4. Concelebrants should use the intinction method or individual chalices should be provided.

While there is no mask mandate or recommendation now in place in our parishes, if you are not fully vaccinated against COVID-19, or if you have serious health issues, please follow your doctor's advice regarding wearing a mask and other ways to help protect yourself and others.

Those parishioners who are ill, have significant health risk factors or care for someone who is immune-compromised or ill, as well as those who have significant fear or anxiety about contracting the coronavirus in a large group of persons are not obliged to attend Mass.

Remember that the situation seems to be ever changing. Encourage your parishioners to stay connected to information coming from medical and other experts, and to stay home and get tested for COVID when not feeling well. Following these recommendations will go a long way in helping to keep our people safe.

Through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Our Lady Help of the Sick, may God bless us and keep us free from all illness. I look forward to gathering with you at the Chrism Mass, during the October Priest Convocation at Sawmill Creek, and other clergy gatherings. Thank you again for all that you do to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ and minister so generously to the people of our Diocese. I am grateful for your patience, understanding, and support throughout this pandemic, which we all pray is coming to an end. May God bless you and those under your pastoral care as we begin our Lenten journey together.