



Office of the Bishop
Roman Catholic Diocese of Lubbock

April 30, 2021

After much consultation over the course of the past few weeks, and with an eye on national and local pandemic trends, and considering recent scientific advice, I believe the time has come to reach a new level of reopening in the Diocese of Lubbock. It is important for me to reiterate that if you are not feeling well, or if you are part of the population more vulnerable to the Coronavirus, it is best that you absent yourself from being present for liturgical services or parish events. **THE DISPENSATION FROM THE OBLIGATION TO ATTEND MASS ON SUNDAYS AND HOLY DAYS REMAINS DISPENSED IN THE DIOCESE OF LUBBOCK UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE.**

As I announce new protective measures, I do so with an even stronger **request that masks be worn** in our churches and at all activities inside parish and diocesan facilities. This is in keeping with the latest CDC recommendations for large gatherings inside buildings. An unselfish consideration for the health and well-being of others and for the Common Good calls us to continue to sacrifice our own desire, even if we are fully vaccinated, to remove our masks.

The new protocols intended to further open up facilities of the parishes and Diocese of Lubbock are as follows:

- **Effective May 1, 2021, parish organizations may meet inside parish facilities, but neither food nor beverages may be served at such meetings. A safe distance of 3 to 6 feet should be observed and masks are to be worn.**
- **Effective the weekend of May 22/23, 2021 -- Pentecost Weekend -- ALL pews in churches may be open. A distance of 3 feet should be established between households in the pews.**
- **Effective May 23, 2021, meals may be served to be eaten inside parish facilities. The parish is to arrange for appropriate distancing to be provided for such parish meals.**
- **Effective June 1, 2021, the Diocesan Pastoral Center and its offices will be open for business during regular business hours, 8:30-4:30 Monday through Friday.**

Pastors are free to establish stricter protocols than those listed above if local circumstances and space limitations so dictate. Pastors are NOT to take any further reopening measures beyond those listed above until instructed to do so by my office. Pastors might want to consider providing areas in their churches which allow for greater distancing for those who might feel uncomfortable with the reduced distancing and for those who are not yet vaccinated.

Most Reverend Robert M. Coerver, Bishop of Lubbock

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Effective immediately I am allowing retreat programs to take place on behalf of groups from and in the Diocese of Lubbock. I do ask that for overnight retreats there be only one person per sleeping room, that presentation and dining areas provide for at least three feet of separation between individuals, and that masks be worn as much as possible. I highly encourage such retreats to schedule as many activities as possible, including meals, outside. I have worked closely with Mercy Center in Slaton to assure that retreats being held there beginning in May take place in as safe a manner as possible – I am very comfortable with the measures that are being implemented at Mercy Center. Retreat groups are to adhere strictly to all protocols put on place by the retreat centers they are utilizing. During the pandemic, spread of the virus occurred and it was necessary to quarantine participants and parishioners due to unauthorized retreats held at non-diocesan facilities; if such happens again it will be necessary to suspend future retreats.

Pastoral care for those in nursing care and correctional facilities may resume. Ministry in such facilities must take place in strict observance of protocols enforced by the facility. At this time, such ministry is to take place only by those willing (not coerced) to do so.

I continue to encourage **creative administration of the Sacraments and celebration of Mass.** This includes continued use of livestreaming and recording Masses. The distribution of Holy Communion can still take place in extraordinary ways. And with good spring weather, I encourage outdoor Masses on weekends as much as possible.

After Pentecost **Funerals, Weddings, and Quinceañeras can be celebrated in churches USING THE NEW DISTANCING MEASURE.** For the time being Clergy of the Diocese of Lubbock are still prevented from conducting Funeral Rites inside funeral homes. Devotions of any sort may be conducted in churches now, observing the protocols currently in effect, and in accordance with the above new protocols after Pentecost.

The question of planning **jamaicas** has been posed, and for good reason. I ENCOURAGE parishes to plan their jamaicas to take place beginning this summer. Parishes are asked to consult local health authorities to determine what precautions will need to be taken. Of course, the later the Jamaica is to take place in the year the probability that fewer precautions will be needed.

Below is a summary of COVID-19 protocols still in place in the Diocese of Lubbock as of May 1, 2021:

- Frequent hand washing and availability of hand sanitizer, and sanitary wipes as needed
- No Communion from the Cup
- No Sign of Peace

- Encouragement of Communion in the Hand
- No Holy Water in churches
- Confessions are to be heard in well ventilated spaces which allow for both distancing and privacy
- Parish offices may be opened at the discretion of the Pastor
- Parish facilities still may NOT be rented out; at this time there is no timetable to allow such rentals to occur
- Thorough sanitizing of all contact surfaces is still necessary
- We continue to ask that people wear masks
- All Faithful in the Diocese of Lubbock are dispensed from the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Day until further notice

At this time there is no projected date for further updating of pandemic protocols. Let us continue to pray for an end to the pandemic. And the Diocese of Lubbock encourages as any people as possible to get vaccinated – for the COMMON GOOD!

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "+ Robert M. Coerver". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Most Reverend Robert M. Coerver
Bishop of Lubbock