



St. Zachary Parish 5-26-2021

(requiring all individuals to wear masks until Phase 5)

Dear parishioners,

With the recent news from the CDC and public health departments regarding masks, I want to provide an update on our own parish operations. In consultation with our Parish Reopening Team and Parish Council, we are going to maintain our mask requirement for all Mass and liturgy attendees until we reach Phase 5, which is anticipated in the next several weeks. We came to this decision for several reasons:

- Given that less than 40% of adults in the State are fully vaccinated, the majority of our adult Mass attendees and visitors remain susceptible to infection and will still need to wear a mask at Mass.
- The vast majority of children under age 18 are not yet vaccinated.
- Our greeter/hospitality team simply does not have the number of volunteers to assist with the added need to validate attendees' vaccination status cards.

You might still wonder why we're continuing to require masks when some large retailers are no longer requiring masks or operating under the "honor system" assuming all visitors not wearing masks are fully vaccinated. First, since the beginning of the pandemic, we have operated with the health and safety of everyone in our community as the foremost priority. Collectively, we have lifted one another up in prayer and charity, adhered to protocols and guidelines, and committed to a unified approach to overcoming the challenges of the pandemic. It is with that spirit of unity that we continue moving forward. Second, we do feel that to make a change in mask use we need to verify vaccination status of all attendees and we simply do not have the capacity for this change right now.

I understand that not all will be pleased with this decision. As always, I thank you for your patience as our staff and volunteers work hard to make the celebration of Mass and our liturgies beautiful and safe as we continue to manage within important health guidelines.

Again, we anticipate changes when we reach Phase 5 in the coming weeks and I hope to be able to share updates then.