



DIOCESE OF SAN BERNARDINO

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

Date: December 16, 2021

TO: Pastors, Administrators, Priests, Deacons, Religious, Parish, School, DPC Staff

FM: Bishop Alberto Rojas *Alberto Rojas*

RE: Diocesan Policy for Advent/Christmas Worship

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Our Lord,

Peace and wellbeing in this holy Advent Season.

The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) has issued a 30-day, mask mandate for all indoor activity, between December 15, 2021 and January 15, 2022, regardless of vaccination status.

The rise in hospitalizations and positivity rates throughout the State, particularly within the Inland Empire, have caused serious concern among health officials, given the intense activity common in the holiday season.

Our Diocese will support the CDPH mandate in order to protect the health and safety of our congregations during this Advent/Christmas liturgical season, when our churches are more frequently filled to capacity. I consulted with our Presbyteral Council which supports this approach.

Under this new protocol, we ask each Pastor and Administrator to support this 30-day mandate as follows effective today:

- Advise parishioners via parish websites/social media and other means that masks will be required of all attendees during the Advent/Christmas season at all of your liturgies. Exceptions will be made as noted in the CDPH guidelines that are attached.
- Non-masked attendees will **not** be refused admittance; however, whenever physically possible, ushers should be encouraged to shepherd those parishioners to pews that are spaced six (6) feet apart in seating and from another pew.
- Capacity limits are no longer limited and should be based on building occupancy standards; ushers are discouraged from exceeding pew capacity in order to accommodate the crowds. Over-flow attendees should be directed to parish hall or other rooms where services can be viewed via screens.
- **All other liturgical protocols remain unchanged.** Pastors/Administrators may, of course, impose more stringent requirements based upon knowledge of their parishes, such as employing separate lines for those who wish to receive Holy Communion on the tongue.
- Parishes with scheduled weddings, baptisms or other special events during this mandate period should contact our EOC Director, Ann Marie Gallant at agallant@sbdiocese.org for specific protocols which may be applicable to that event.

As we prepare for this blessed season, let us not allow this one, minor mandate to impact the preparation for and celebration of Our Lord's Birth. May your Christmas Season be truly blessed.