

Catholic Diocese of Jackson  
Updated Protocols during the Pandemic  
Updated as of April 30, 2021

1. To begin with, we want to acknowledge that we realize that the size and demographics of the parish community, as well as the size and layout of the church building and parish facilities, will shape the way the priest and the parish leaders decide with prudence and care the way to implement these policies and norms. There are going to be many areas in these protocols in which the local community can look at the local reality and make a prudent decision.

2. Common sense, as well as local and state ordinances and mandates, should shape the safety protocols implemented by the parish.

- There should be awareness of not clustering in small groups when gathering for mass and at social gatherings and to practice safety measures.
- As more of the faithful get vaccinated, it will help diminish the spread of the virus.
- When implementing these safety protocols, we should all be cognizant of avoiding unnecessary risks.

3. For masses:

- Social distancing will be at 3 feet rather than 6 feet.
- Masks are still required.
- Communion will be received in the hand, not directly in the mouth.
- Hymnals and missalettes may be used in the pews.
- Sanitizing the pews does not have to be as often as before, since the CDC states that the risk from contracting the virus from surfaces is minimal. The community should prudently decide on sanitizing procedures.
- Hand sanitizer should still be used by parishioners upon entrance to the church and should be provided by the parish.
- Offertory should be collected using a basket placed in an accessible place, such as a table near the entrance to the church rather than passing a basket during offertory time.

- Bulletins can be handed out to parishioners at Mass, but we also encourage you to email bulletins to parishioners using Flocknote.

4. For meetings, gatherings, parish groups and outside groups, the local community will make the decision as to what it can accommodate in its facilities.

- Awareness of safety protocols needs to be followed when serving meals. Meals should still not be buffet style or self-serve.
- Social distancing should be observed in meetings, a minimum of 3 feet.
- The local community can decide if it is safe and prudent to allow non-parish outside groups to meet in the facilities at this time.
- The local community will decide the sanitizing and cleaning procedures needed at parish facilities.
- At these gatherings, awareness should be made as to those times we can let our guard down, such as when we gather in clusters without masks and social distancing and risk exposure. Masks should be worn as the norm but the particular situation can be evaluated.

5. Many parishes will be holding events for children and youth during the summer, including youth activities and vacation Bible school.

These things should be kept in mind:

- Outdoor activities for children and youth will minimize the risk of exposure.
- For trips, the risk should be evaluated, knowing that day trips are far safer than overnight trips. A preference should be made for local trips and trips of three hours and less, rather than long-distance trips. There is a lot we can do without traveling a long distance. When planning a trip, safety while using transportation and a plan for dealing with sickness and quarantining if that situation arises needs to be addressed. Keeping everyone safe on any kind of trip and having a contingency plan should be priorities.
- Service projects are feasible, as long as safety procedures and protocols are kept in mind.
- Meals and snacks should not be self-serve or buffet style. Individually wrapped snacks and food items minimize the safety risk.

- When planning such activities, keep in mind situations where we can let our guard down, which could create situations of greater risk.

We want to thank all of you for your efforts in keeping our parishioners safe during the pandemic. We acknowledge that all of us are very weary of dealing with the pandemic. We can modify our protocols and procedures as described above to allow more flexibility, but this is not the time to let our guard down completely. We will get through the summer months with the hope that things will continue to improve. These modified procedures will allow us more flexibility. We will be constantly monitoring the situation as reality changes.