



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP
DIOCESE OF MANCHESTER

June 6, 2021

*Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood
of Christ*

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

For more than one year, you have faced difficult challenges personally in the midst of a pandemic. And as a Church, as we struggled to keep safe all entrusted to our care, some also have faced extended times separated from the Eucharist, the source and summit of our lives as Christians.

After reading “the signs of the times” regarding the benefit of our collective efforts for the reduction of contagion, in light of the positive developments we have seen in New Hampshire, and the changes in guidance from public health authorities, it is with great joy that I can now announce that effective today, June 6, 2021, the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ, the COVID-19 restrictions and procedures which we have had in place for Masses in this Diocese will no longer be in effect.

Except for the bringing up of the Gifts, the exchange of the Sign of Peace, and the Distribution of the Precious Blood (all of which shall remain suspended for the time being), the Liturgy will be celebrated as before the pandemic. While a positive trend is very much anticipated to continue in New Hampshire, directives may be reinstated if there is a change of circumstances. Our continued care for the most vulnerable will help to keep us on a positive track.

The wearing or not wearing of a mask at Mass will now be at the option of the individual. In making a decision whether to wear a mask, those who have not been vaccinated must be mindful of the need to take other safeguards for the care of self and others, as recommended by public health authorities. In any event, let us not shame or admonish other people whatever course of action they decide to take.

As was the case before the pandemic, those who are sick should not attend Mass. This would include those who recently have been exposed to COVID or any other communicable illness. These individuals are excused but of course, should not be attending other events that would pose the same concerns. A mother’s words ring true: “If you’re too sick to go to church, you’re too sick to go out and play.”

I want to thank you for the depth of support you extended to your parishes during this difficult time, and for placing the health and safety of your sisters and brothers above your own comfort and convenience. And I share in the overwhelming gratitude we all owe to our priests,

deacons, and parish staff members, who quickly found new ways to keep parishioners connected to Mass, the Sacraments, and to Parish life. We emerge from the darkness of the pandemic with a new awareness of our closeness as members of the Body of Christ.

This has been a sobering 18 months, but this time has highlighted for all the importance of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and it would be unthinkable to “return to normal” without having reflected on this from the First Letter of St. John:

What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen
with our eyes, what we looked upon and touched with our hands concerns
the Word of Life.

Looking forward with great anticipation to welcoming each of you back to the Lord’s Table, I remain

Sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter A. Libasci". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross at the beginning.

Most Reverend Peter A. Libasci
Bishop of Manchester