

Diocese of Scranton COVID-19 Protocol Reminders for Christmas 2021

Updated December 10, 2021



With Christmas quickly approaching, the Diocese of Scranton has reminded parishes about COVID-19 protocols that remain in place. Christmas often brings many visitors, so parishes are encouraged to share these protocols in bulletins and through other communication methods that are available.

While all of these protocols have been in place since August – the number of new, daily COVID-19 infections throughout our 11 counties continues to be high. That means we must all remain vigilant and not let down our guard. We must all use our best judgment to protect our own health and the health of our neighbors.

COVID-19 PROTOCOL REMINDERS FOR CHRISTMAS 2021:

- The Diocese of Scranton **strongly recommends** that all parishioners wear a mask while attending Mass, regardless of vaccination status. As Catholics, we have a responsibility to protect our friends and neighbors and mask wearing remains an important mitigation tool against community spread.
- Parishes should post signs strongly recommending the use of face masks by all parishioners, especially for those individuals who may be visiting for Christmas or have not attended Mass in-person recently. Bulletin announcements and announcements prior to Mass are also ways that can be used to help communicate this message.
- Anyone who is sick should stay home and participate in the celebration of Mass through Catholic Television or a parish livestream Mass. In addition, anyone displaying COVID-19 symptoms (fever, cough, sore throat, shortness of breath, headache, or muscle pain) should not attend Mass in-person.
- Altar servers need to wear a mask while performing their duties.
- Priests, Deacons and other ministers involved in entrance/exit processions are strongly encouraged to wear masks.
- Priests, Deacons and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion must wash or sanitize their hands prior to the distribution of Holy Communion. All ministers should put their mask on **BEFORE** going to wash or sanitize their hands.
- Priests, Deacons and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion must wear a mask during the distribution of Holy Communion. All ministers should sanitize their hands immediately if they come into contact with a recipient's tongue.
- At no time should church leaders demand information about vaccination status (or any other protected health information), request vaccination cards be shown on admittance, or pressure attendees in any way to show proof of vaccination. When in doubt, parishes should continue to plan their gatherings with the caution that some participants may be unvaccinated.
- Parishes should continue to be vigilant in the planning of any Christmas events that might bring together a large number of people from various households. Masks would be strongly recommended for any such indoor events.