

# Announcement from Bishop Edward Weisenburger

## Change in Protocols Effective January 4, 2021

In light of substantial spikes in Covid-19 virus transmission, along with substantially increased critical hospital census numbers, the following changes to Diocese of Tucson protocols are in effect as of January 8, 2020. They shall remain in effect for four weeks, until February 5<sup>th</sup>, with a review taking place early in the week of February 1<sup>st</sup>.

### Mass Celebrations and Baptisms

Both Sunday and weekday indoor Masses or gatherings are suspended. Masses may be celebrated outdoors in accord with existing protocols.

Funerals and weddings may be celebrated indoors but are limited to a maximum of 25 persons; baptisms are limited to a maximum of ten persons. No gatherings before or following these celebrations are allowed on parish or church property.



In individual circumstances a pastor may petition me, Bishop Edward Weisenburger, for permission to celebrate indoor Masses. Multiple issues will be taken into consideration based upon local circumstances. For instance, permission will not be considered for a parish that offers only indoor Masses. Moreover, pastors are strongly encouraged to provide pastoral care through Masses celebrated for the people via the internet as well as providing Holy Communion and the Sacrament of Penance outdoors.

### Parish Offices

During this same four-week period, parish offices must close to the public.

Parish staff shall work from home with the exception of the priests assigned to the parish (or canonical Parish Administrator) and maintenance staff.

In individual circumstances a pastor may petition me, Bishop Edward Weisenburger, for permission to have staff in the office. However, if staff needs to be in the office it must be limited to one employee at a time and without clergy present.



It is significant to recall that in light of the Catholic Church's rich history of spiritual devotions (most especially praying the Rosary, meditating upon Scripture, and prayer books) we are uniquely positioned to provide generous spiritual assistance to the faithful. A suspension of four weeks from indoor liturgies also allows us to stand in solidarity with those who are critically ill, healthcare workers, the unemployed, those grieving the loss of loved ones, and all those whose lives have been far more substantially altered.

Those persons identified in the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines as "high risk" are strongly encouraged to receive the Church's ministry mediated through the internet while remaining at home. This caution is greatly lessened after such persons have been able to receive a Covid vaccination.

Unlike the period of time early in the pandemic, when in-person worship was initially suspended, we now can see victory on the horizon. A period of four weeks should make a considerable difference in the availability of the Covid vaccine for those most at risk. Hopefully it also will help us to evaluate more accurately the anticipated post-Christmas spike in infections and resulting hospitalizations.

Bishop Edward J. Weisenburger