Bishop Solis updates Covid directives

Friday, Feb. 04, 2022



Diocese of Salt Lake City

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**By The Most Rev. Oscar A. Solis**

Bishop of Salt Lake City

*On Feb. 1, the Most Rev. Oscar A. Solis, Bishop of Salt Lake City, sent the following memo to all clergy, religious, seminarians, Catholic school principals, religious education directors and diocesan staff in the Diocese of Salt Lake City*:

Dear Faithful and Friends of the Diocese of Salt Lake City,

Greetings of Christ’s peace and love! Since the start of the pandemic, our diocese has implemented safety protocols according to local health orders to ensure that our churches can continue to celebrate the Holy Eucharist and other life-giving Sacraments, our Catholic schools remain open, and that the faithful and all visitors to our churches and other institutions remain safe for our children and the most vulnerable.

The highly contagious spread of the Omicron strain has infected many individuals and it continues to pose a great danger to everyone vaccinated or unvaccinated. Healthcare authorities expect Omicron cases to peak and then to drop soon, yet hospitalizations and deaths in Utah remain high. As expected, there was a sharp surge in cases after the Christmas break. Since testing for most people is no longer an option, the main indicator of community spread is the rate or level of hospitalizations and, unfortunately, deaths. We have suffered a proportional number of hospitalizations and deaths among our faithful as suffered in the wider community.

Even though a large majority of our priests were vaccinated, the virus did not spare our clergy. This month of January, three were infected and four others who were exposed to people tested positive. Due to the limited number of priests in our diocese, the need of even one to quarantine means weekend Masses in that parish have to be suspended or substituted with Communion Service or Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest.

We take seriously our sacred responsibility as an act of charity to safeguard the health and the sanctity of every human life. After consulting with the senior staff, regional deans and presbyteral council, all parishes, missions, schools and other institutions in our diocese will extend the present safety protocols, including the wearing of masks, for an additional two weeks, from Feb. 1 through Feb. 15.

Let us pray and hope that after two weeks, the COVID-19 case numbers and hospitalizations begin to drop, so that pastors, administrators, principals and other executives will have more autonomy in applying the diocesan safety directives. We will continue meeting regularly with diocesan staff and leaders to review the situation and will make necessary changes or adjustments to our safety protocols accordingly.

Grateful for your understanding and with prayerful wishes of God’s blessings during these challenging times, I remain

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Bishop Oscar A. Solis