



Diocese of Birmingham in Alabama

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Office of the Bishop

MEMORANDUM

TO: Priests, Deacons, Diocesan Staff

FROM: Bishop Steven J. Raica *+ sgr*

RE: Directive regarding COVID / Delta Variant

DATE: August 27, 2021

Concerns are being raised regarding the recent uptick in COVID / Delta variant cases throughout the State of Alabama. In fact, most, if not all, ICU beds are at or near capacity in this most recent surge, more than the previous surge, mostly by the non-vaccinated. Health officials are bringing an urgent appeal to take this matter seriously.

In the State of Alabama, vaccinations have sadly lagged well-behind the national average. I echo and agree the words of Pope Francis who explains that a vaccination is an act of “charity toward neighbor”. It is an important step to retard the spread of this pernicious virus. The competent authorities have urged all who can to be vaccinated. This week the Pfizer vaccine was approved by the FDA. The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith has also vouched for the morality of taking the appropriate vaccination. Thus, the Pfizer and Moderna vaccine may be received without moral reservation. For those eligible, taking the vaccination helps everyone.

For those who have chosen not to be vaccinated for personal reasons of conscience concerns, should continue with prophylactic measures to protect themselves, their families, colleagues, and those in their social circles. These measures include, but are not limited to, masking appropriately, maintaining a social distance, quarantining when there’s an exposure, and frequent COVID tests.

The Diocese is not disposed to granting “religious exemptions.” Those who express concerns for conscience reasons should do so on their own initiative after consultation with their primary care physician.

While I am aware that we have not had a viral outbreak in our offices (Thanks be to God!), I nevertheless express my concern for the well-being of our diocesan chancery community as the variant is spiking. I ask that we observe the following protocols beginning Monday, August 30, 2021 until the end of September unless there is an update in the meantime.

- 1) **Wearing masks** while inside our Chancery building, in the corridors and in meetings insofar as possible.
Masks can be optional in meetings if all parties are vaccinated;
- 2) **Social distancing** insofar as possible;
- 3) **Quarantine / work from home** if you have been exposed.

Those who have not been vaccinated are urged to do so at their earliest convenience, even if they must leave work to do so. If for some reason you cannot be vaccinated, then you should be tested on a regular basis as determined by your physician.

It appears the Delta Variant will peak soon. Let's all play our part to reduce the burden of this infection on our families, our co-workers, our communities. Above all, may we be especially mindful of the doctors and nurses who risk their lives every day providing dedicated, specialized care for those affected.