

# DIOCESE OF BEAUMONT

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

Pentecost 2021

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,


Greetings in the Risen Lord who has sent His Holy Spirit to fill us with Peace and Joy! This indeed is a beautiful moment for all of us as we are in the hopeful and waning days of what has been a long eighteen months of struggle and challenge. Our diocese has done its very best to protect the most vulnerable in our midst through our protocols of sanitizing, social distancing and the use of face coverings. Now at this moment on the journey we have been on together, it seems opportune to relax the face-covering mandate upon our parish communities coinciding with the lifting of the dispensation of the Sunday Mass obligation (decree). A number of factors have contributed to this decision effective on Pentecost weekend (May 22-23, 2021), in particular, numerous and ongoing consultations with medical and civil authorities, the most recent CDC guidelines regarding vaccinated persons (5/13/21), the continued decrease in COVID infection rates, and the widespread availability of vaccinations in Southeast Texas. Face-coverings will be encouraged but not enforced; every person must make informed and responsible decisions for their own well-being and be conscious of the needs and sensitivities of others. At this point in the ongoing pandemic, I ask that we respect the choices of those around us who decide to wear a mask or not. This has never been a partisan issue for the Church and I want to reaffirm that we gather for worship of the living God and not for conflict with each other. For the past year and a half, the Diocese of Beaumont has been striving to make well-informed and prudent decisions out of love and care for all of the faithful, especially those who are most vulnerable. Our parishes will continue to encourage the elderly and those with pre-existing conditions to wear masks and sit in the designated sections of our churches set aside for social distancing.

We need the Eucharist for our spiritual nourishment and we need our Church family for strength – for those who have not been able to partake in Holy Communion and gather with your local community for the past many months, please come home, we are waiting for you! As is always the case, the seriously sick and susceptible are exempt from Sunday Mass, please contact your local parish if you are a shut-in and would like to receive Holy Communion at home. In the coming months we want to mark the end of the pandemic with two particular and important moments: remembrance of those who have died and celebration of gratitude for an end to this particular period of history.

1. There will be Memorial Masses in our parishes for those who have died in the previous year and a half in order to assist those who need a public and communal way to mourn and memorialize our loved ones. I will celebrate such a Mass on Wednesday July 28<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 PM at the Cathedra-Basilica, on the vigil of Saints Martha, Mary, and Lazarus – a fitting group of intercessors.
2. Then as a diocese, all of our parishes will enter into a wonderful “Celebration Weekend” for the Solemnity of Christ the King on November 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>. This gives us all the chance to celebrate our faith, express our gratitude, and joyfully move forward as a community of believers. We are already planning a youth festival for Saturday November 20<sup>th</sup> and want to encourage all of our parishes to start planning activities to help us get “back to better” (not just back to normal).

As we celebrate the Birthday of the Church on Pentecost, may we also experience the re-birth of the Church in Southeast Texas – together better than ever!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

  
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Most Rev. David L. Toups  
Bishop of Beaumont