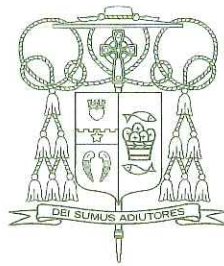


## DIOCESE OF SAN ANGELO

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April 29, 2021

### Diocese of San Angelo Enters Phase Two

Dear friends in Christ,

As you know, the current conditions of the coronavirus pandemic in West Texas include lower rates of active cases, hospitalizations, and deaths. Therefore, public liturgies in the Diocese of San Angelo will move to the more relaxed Phase Two Protocols on May 8, 2021.

In our new Phase Two Protocols for Public Liturgies, the changes can be summarized as follows:

- Facemasks for attendees are not mandated but are strongly encouraged.
- Every pew may now be used.
- The social distance requirement of six feet is now reduced to three feet.

#### Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation:

The general dispensation from attending Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation expires on the weekend of Pentecost Sunday, May 23, 2021. Catholics in the Diocese of San Angelo are dispensed from the obligation ONLY if they:

- a. are age 65 or over, or
- b. are caring for the sick, or
- c. are sick, including those who have tested positive for the coronavirus and those who have had close contact with someone who has tested positive for the coronavirus, regardless of how well they feel, or
- d. have underlying health conditions, or
- e. are truly and sincerely fearful that they may contract the coronavirus. A true and sincere fear is one that has prevented a person from attending non-required activities, such as eating at a restaurant, gatherings with family and friends, attending a movie theater, etc.

Those who do not meet any of the above criteria are obligated to attend Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation. This obligation is not satisfied by watching a virtual or livestreamed Mass.

Accommodations for Maintaining Phase One Protocols:

While the Diocese of San Angelo will utilize the more relaxed Phase Two Protocols for Public Liturgies, each parish or mission cluster is encouraged to offer at least one opportunity for people to attend Mass on Sundays or holy days of obligation with adherence to Phase One Protocols. This will accommodate those who are uncomfortable with or leery of the more relaxed Phase Two Protocols.

Phase One Protocols include 6-foot social distance between non-family groups, skipping every other pew, and wearing facemasks.

Options for Phase One Protocol accommodations:

- a. Celebrate a separate liturgy that has full Phase One Protocols in place.
- b. Reserve an appropriate section within the church or parish facilities that will practice Phase One Protocols.
- c. Designate one of the churches or missions in a cluster to use full Phase One Protocols while the others have relaxed protocols.
- d. Utilize any other appropriate manner to accommodate those individuals who are not comfortable with the Phase Two Protocols.

The pastor will decide how to offer these liturgies in a way that will work best for his community.

Even considering the current improved coronavirus conditions, all of the Phase One Protocols are still available for use as needed in the judgment of the pastor. Furthermore, in any given parish or area, if a new flareup of the coronavirus occurs, then the parish should move back to a more restrictive option from the Phase One Protocols of December 18, 2020.

You may find the complete set of new Phase Two Protocols in the coronavirus section of our diocesan website at [www.sanangelodiocese.org](http://www.sanangelodiocese.org).

I encourage those over the age of 16 to receive the COVID-19 vaccine for the sake of public health in view of the common good of society.

May the Holy Spirit help us to revive our participation in the sacraments and to reengage people in active parish life. I am sincerely grateful to all who have been helping in the implementation of our coronavirus protocols, especially our priests, deacons, and other parish leaders.

In the joy of Christ's service,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael J. Sis". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Most Reverend Michael J. Sis  
Bishop of San Angelo

MJS/lc