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**Archbishop John C. Wester Promulgates
New Liturgical Directives in Response to
NM Department of Health's Latest Public Health Order**

ALBUQUERQUE – Wednesday, May 19, 2021 -- Archbishop John C. Wester is promulgating the following liturgical restriction guidance in response to the Public Health Order from the New Mexico Department of Health dated May 14, 2021 per the recommendations of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe's COVID-19 Response Team.

While the issue of restrictions has been particularly contentious throughout the pandemic, charity towards the vulnerable obliges safety over comfort or "the normal." The state projects a wider relaxation of restrictions when state vaccination percentage reaches approximately 61% (currently projected to be June 30, 2021). Further updates/relaxation on restriction guidance for the Archdiocese of Santa Fe will be provided as needed.

The directives are:

- Limitations of capacity should remain per the **more restrictive** guidance that is listed in the most recent health order (dated May 14, 2021). For example, if your county is classified as "turquoise," church capacity should be restricted to health-recommended 75% rather than the strictly legally allowed 100%.
- Masks are to continue to be worn by all except celebrants, deacons, lectors, cantors, and choir members while performing their respective vocal liturgical functions.
- Social distancing is to continue to be observed.
- Per pastor's judgment, Holy Communion may be restored to its normal place in the Mass. Pastors are to arrange Holy Communion reception so that there is a minimum of "crossing lines" so as to minimize crossing through others' social distance spaces.
- Holy Communion may be received on the tongue if:
 - A separate station for those so receiving is provided or, if there is only one station, those so receiving receive last; and,
 - The distributing minister is fully vaccinated; and,
 - The distributing minister sanitizes his/her hands prior to and immediately after distribution.

Should the above condition be unable to be observed, distribution of Holy Communion on the tongue should be delayed.

- Singing is allowed by choirs only, whose members are to all have been fully vaccinated. Social distancing is recommended for choir members, but can be somewhat relaxed where necessary.
- Deacons and 1-2 servers may be utilized at Mass, maintaining masks and social distancing.
- Fiestas may be planned and conducted provided they are able to observe the health order capacity/gathering/other restrictions then in place for both indoor and outdoor venues.

- Dispensation from Sunday Mass is still provided for those whom judge it necessary for health of themselves or others.
- Pastors retain the authority to utilize more (but not less) restrictive measures should they feel it necessary or prudent.

Contact Very Reverend Glennon Jones, Vicar General at vg@archdiosf.org --END