



CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF ARLINGTON

Statement from the Catholic Diocese of Arlington on Implementation of Governor Ralph Northam's New Statewide Restrictions to Contain the Spread of COVID-19

On Friday, November 13, 2020, Governor Northam announced new statewide restrictions intended to help contain the spread of COVID-19. These measures took effect at 12:01 a.m. on Monday, November 16, 2020.

Most importantly, the announcement does *not* change the ability of parishes to continue offering public celebration of the Mass and the other sacraments. It also does not change the ability of diocesan schools to offer in-person and hybrid learning or of parishes to offer religious education classes, all of which continue to happen in environments consistent with health and safety protocols to mitigate the spread of the coronavirus.

The portion of the Governor's announcement that directly impacts parish and school events is the new limit of 25 people, down from 250 previously, for public and private in-person indoor and outdoor gatherings. Executive Order 67 *exempts* religious services and "educational instructional settings."

The new guidance also expands the current face covering mandate. All persons aged 5 and older must wear a face covering in indoor public spaces. Exceptions can be found in Executive Order 63.

Each parish and school is to evaluate how its various events and functions may be impacted by Governor Northam's announcement and provide new guidance to those impacted by the changes.

We have worked to uphold COVID-19 protocols that include social distancing, face coverings, and frequent cleaning of indoor spaces. Diocesan Catholic schools continue to be a model for how to create an environment where in-person learning can take place while ensuring health protocols mitigate the spread of the virus, including the ability to transition to all-virtual learning if the circumstances necessitate it.

The Diocese continues to work closely with local health officials, following federal, state and local guidelines, to mitigate the spread of the virus throughout our communities.