

From: **Fr. James Misko** <fr-james-misko@austindiocese.org>
Date: Fri, Jul 3, 2020 at 10:26 AM
Subject: [priests] Message from Bishop Vasquez re. Face Masks
To: Rev. Darrell Kostiha <kostihad@gmail.com>
Cc: Deacon Ron Walker <ron-walker@austindiocese.org>

Dear Brother Priests,

Yesterday, Governor Abbott issued [Executive Order GA-29](#) which goes into effect **today at 12:00 noon**, ordering a state-wide face-covering requirement (with few exceptions). Under the order, every person in Texas is required to wear a face covering over the nose and mouth when inside a commercial entity or other building or space open to the public, or when in an outdoor public space, wherever it is not feasible to maintain six feet of social distancing from another person not in the same household.

Our role as spiritual leaders is to work along-side our civil leaders in protecting the common good of all citizens. We are also called as priests to defend life at all stages. Following the governor's order is thus our obligation as citizens and our obligation as priests living out and preaching the Gospel of Life.

I now ask all priests, as outlined by #5 of the revised temporary protocols for liturgy sent out by the Vicar General, **to strongly encourage the faithful to wear facemasks while on parish campuses**. While the governor's order does not definitively require the use of facemasks for people in churches, I urge you to impress upon the people of God my expectation as their bishop that they wear facemasks at Mass for the common good of our communities.

Here is further clarifying information from the order that may be helpful as you guide your parish:

The requirement does not apply to individuals who:

- are under age 10;
- have a medical condition or disability that prevents wearing a face covering;
- are consuming food or drink, or are seated at a restaurant to eat or drink;
- are giving a speech for a broadcast or to an audience.

Wearing a face covering is also not required but strongly encouraged for individuals who:

- are actively providing or obtaining access to religious worship; or
- are in a county that meets certain requirements and the county judge has followed certain requirements to affirmatively opt-out of the state-wide face-covering requirement.

I realize that this may cause further burden to your already challenging work in the parish. Know that I remain grateful to you for your outstanding work in leading your parishes. You are very important to me. Please take good care yourselves.

Wishing you God's protection,

Bishop Vásquez
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