



August 6, 2021

The University of the Incarnate Word is a diverse population made up of students, faculty, staff, and Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word. We are uniquely situated next door to the Village at Incarnate Word – a retirement center and home to some of our Incarnate Word family. Many of our liturgies at the University serve not only the campus community, but also our local community.

Due to the rapidly changing conditions caused by the COVID-19 Delta variant, which presents a much higher and faster rate of infection than previously seen, our mask and physical distancing policies have been updated accordingly.

Effective Friday, August 6, 2021, the COVID-19 Mask policy at the University of the Incarnate Word is modified as follows:

- **Mask and face coverings** will be now required indoors by those who are vaccinated as well as persons not vaccinated. Masks will also be required outdoors in group settings and when social distancing cannot be maintained.

The local, regional, and state-wide progression of COVID-19 will continue to be monitored daily by the university. Because the dignity, health, and well-being of our internationally and generationally diverse community are of utmost concern to the university, decisions regarding university operations, including our campus worship, continue to be made in consultation with medical professionals and with guidance from the CDC and the San Antonio Metropolitan Health District. As a Catholic institution within the Archdiocese of San Antonio, we also continue to follow guidelines issued by the Archdiocese with modifications that best support our diverse worshiping community and circumstances as a campus.

Currently, the following guidelines remain in effect or are amended as follows:

- **Physical distancing.** The chapel will maintain physical distancing protocols for seating and during the procession to receive communion. Individuals and group attendees independent of other family, dorm, or work groups, are asked to self-distance themselves in accordance with current CDC guidelines for Institutions of Higher Learning, staying at least 6 feet distance from those who do not live in the same household. (See: https://bit.ly/CDCGuidelines_IHEs) Seating will begin in the second row from the front and continue every other row. We ask that attendees take the first available seat from the front, utilizing staggered seating throughout all remaining rows in the chapel.
- **Capacity.** Seating capacity for Our Lady's Chapel will accommodate approximately 75 individuals.
- **Processions, ministries, Sign of Peace.** The reinstatement of liturgical processions and ministries will continue to be monitored in accordance with our circumstances on campus, and as a continued decline in cases is apparent. Further instructions will be given via Flocknote, internal communications, social media, and announcements during Sunday Mass. For the time being, we will maintain the current procession pattern during communion: everyone moving right (following the reception of the Eucharist) and proceeding down the side aisle to their seats. During the Sign of Peace, please continue to greet each other with a simple gesture as has been customary throughout the last year.
- **In-person & live-stream via Zoom.** Mass will be offered in a hybrid setting (i.e., in-person with livestreaming to those who wish to attend virtually).

- **Registration.** Links to register for in-person and remote worship and other events will be available through our Flocknote App in our weekly *Sunday Notes* publication, as well as through internal university email and social media. Since we are not a parish with a registry of members, we use registration as a means of tracking the number of spaces available for in-person attendees, as well as communicating with our community should the need arise. As we move into the Fall semester, registration will be an important vehicle in helping us serve our community more pastorally and effectively.
- **Thermal Scanner.** The thermal scanner near Our Lady's Chapel will continue to be available for those who wish to use it prior to entering the worship space. The Cardinal Health check is no longer required. We ask that all in-person attendees monitor their conditions carefully before coming to public worship at UIW. If ill, please stay home.
- **Vaccinations.** We will *not* require proof of vaccination for COVID-19.
- **Printed materials.** An electronic worship aid/bulletin will continue to be provided in lieu of printed materials. We invite you to use your phone, iPad, or tablet to access this document, which will be available via Flocknote, university email, or by QR code at the entrance to the chapel.
- **Holy Communion.** The Eucharist will continue to be offered under one species. At this time, communion will *not* be offered on the tongue.
- **Holy Water.** Fonts will remain empty until further notice.
- **Participation.** We encourage your participation in the liturgy by engaging in spoken responses, the various postures of the Mass, and singing as you feel comfortable. We will continue to monitor safety guidelines and professional studies regarding all aspects of worship, especially singing and the use of wind instruments, as well as their safe inclusion in our prayer with the use of specially designed masks and equipment.
- **Cleaning/Air Quality.** A thorough deep cleaning of Our Lady's Chapel was performed at the end of July. The filters currently in use in the chapel are considered hospital level air quality and the fresh air make up in this space has also been increased. The chapel will continue to be sanitized after celebrations. Hand sanitizer will continue to be available in various areas in and outside the chapel.
- **Retreats & other events.** As we move toward the Fall semester, University retreats and other events will be held in-person at the discretion of UMM leadership and current university guidelines.
- **Communication.** As we have all come to learn, a pandemic is a fluid situation. Should circumstances change, we will inform our worshipping community via our Flocknote app, internal university communications, and social media. We cannot stress enough the importance of registering with our University of the Incarnate Word network if you consider UIW your worshipping community. It is the best means we have of keeping connected with you and sharing information quickly if need be. Registration is free and can be done here: <https://universityoftheincarnate.flocknote.com/>

These changes will remain in effect until rescinded and are subject to review every two weeks or as circumstances demand.

Respectfully,

Sr. Walter Maher, VP for Mission & Ministry and
University Mission and Ministry Staff,
 University of the Incarnate Word