

**SPECIAL BULLETIN: Fr. Dave on Lifting of Ohio COVID-19 Health Orders**  
**05.13.2021**

---

Dear Franciscan University Community,

Peace and Blessing.

Yesterday Governor Mike DeWine announced that Ohio COVID-19 Health Orders will be lifted on June 2, 2021.

Franciscan University will lift these orders on the same day, making masks voluntary and eliminating other COVID-related protocols that are no longer necessary due to changes in state-wide mandates, including social distancing requirements in offices, facilities, and events.

I do understand that some employees may feel more comfortable keeping the Plexiglas barriers around their workspaces for now, and when possible, you should be permitted to do this. Please work with your supervisor on this specific issue.

The University will end the COVID-19 accommodation process and the COVID-19 emergency paid sick leave program effective June 2, 2021. All employees who have been working remotely or with other flexible arrangements related to the COVID-19 pandemic are asked to work with your supervisors and return to your pre-COVID working situation by June 14 (unless otherwise agreed upon and approved by your supervisor and vice president).

We now take a significant step toward life after this global pandemic.

I want to personally thank you for each and every sacrifice you have made over the last year and a half during the COVID-19 pandemic. When we began this past academic year, we weren't certain we would make it through, but we took a step in faith, and we made it. Praise God!

During the last year, we came together; we sacrificed, adapted, and succeeded in keeping the doors open. We provided a dynamic and engaging campus experience that fostered learning, ongoing conversion, personal relationships, and community life. We did not just get by— we thrived and will graduate the largest class ever this weekend.

This has been a blessed year, and I do not want us to lose sight of this. Yes, we have experienced difficulties, trials, and struggles, but we have also been so very blessed. We accomplished what many other schools chose not to even try. I will forever be proud of what we have done; I hope you will be, too.

**But our year has not left us without scars. Our Church, country, and many families have experienced loss and division this year, and sadly, this has also been the case in our University community. Our path forward will require prayer, repentance, healing, and forgiveness. We will begin this process at our end-of-the-year Mass on Monday, May 17, at 9:00 a.m. I ask that everyone please be present for this liturgy and the meetings that will follow in Finnegan Fieldhouse.**

As we make our journey back to normalcy, let us heed the words of St. Francis and “let us begin again.” Let us once again commit to placing Christ in the center of our personal lives, our departments, schools, and University. Only then can healing and wholeness begin. Let us ask the Holy Spirit to come with his sanctifying grace and bring wholeness to our community.

Finally, I am so thankful for everything each of you has done to help us thrive amidst these seemingly impossible odds. This year has been a reminder that with God all things are possible, and, in our weakness, we are made strong. I’m looking forward to seeing where God leads us as we rebuild together and continue on the path he has set out for us.

God’s richest blessings,

Father Dave Pivonka, TOR  
President  
Franciscan University of Steubenville