



**THE CELEBRATION OF THE SACRED LITURGY  
DURING THE PENNSYLVANIA GREEN PHASE  
AND THE ARCHDIOCESAN OPEN PHASE**

**OFFICE FOR DIVINE WORSHIP  
ARCHDIOCESE OF PHILADELPHIA  
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 24, 2020**

As of June 26, 2020, the five county area of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia is scheduled to move into the green phase of the reopening of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. However, the City of Philadelphia will begin to move into the green phase on July 3, 2020. The green phase continues to require precautions to limit the spread of COVID-19 and our corporate responsibility to observe them.

The liturgical directives that follow are for the Pennsylvania green phase and our Archdiocesan Open Phase for the celebration of the Sacred Liturgy. They are authorized by the Archbishop to go into effect on Friday morning, June 26, 2020. These directives do not conflict with what is restricted for the City of Philadelphia from June 26 through to July 3, 2020.

**GENERAL POINTS**

- The faithful continue to be dispensed by the Archbishop from the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation until further notice.
  - *For the spiritual and pastoral benefit of the faithful, several weeks notice will be provided as to when the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation will be reinstated by the Archbishop.*
  - *Although the obligation is dispensed at this time, pastors should encourage the faithful to keep the Lord's Day with prayer and reflection, along with the possible viewing of a live streamed celebration of Mass.*
  - *Those who are sick or compromised due to health conditions are not to come to church. Likewise, those who are at risk are not to exercise liturgical ministries.*

- During the green phase, if adjustments were made to the Mass schedule for Sundays and weekdays, the typical Mass schedule should be restored.
- Wedding Masses may continue to take place on Sundays during and outside the scheduled Masses.
- Additional confessions should be scheduled on Sundays, even during Mass if needed.
- Live stream services should continue for Mass and other sacramental celebrations and devotions.
- The new Holy Oils will be sent to the Deans the week of June 28, 2020 for distribution to parishes and institutions within the deaneries. More information will be forthcoming.

### **REQUIRED PRECAUTIONS DURING THE GREEN/OPEN PHASE**

On June 1, 2020, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania published updated guidance for in person activities during the yellow and green phases. This guidance reaffirms the need for all to observe the COVID-19 mitigating standards of sanitation, social distancing, and occupancy limitations. Similar to the pertinent CDC Guidelines for houses of worship, the guidance from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania makes some exceptions for houses of worship:

*Churches, synagogues, temples, mosques and other places of congregate worship are specifically excluded from the limitations established by this Guidance (cf. the June 1, 2020 document found on the website of the Pennsylvania Department of Health). These institutions are strongly encouraged to institute social distancing and other mitigation measures like masking at their gathering.*

Therefore, during the green phase the following mitigating standards are to be observed with the exceptions and adjustments listed below for the Archdiocese of Philadelphia.

### **SANITATION**

- All areas of the church are to be sanitized routinely, including the Confessional areas. The guidelines for sanitation provided by the CDC for houses of worship are those endorsed by the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. These guidelines indicate that **high-touch** surfaces should be cleaned and disinfected after each celebration. Please see:  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/faith-based.html>.

### **SOCIAL DISTANCING**

In general, social distancing means that there should be a distance all around the person and not only lateral distancing. Six feet is the recommended norm for social distancing.

The guidelines for social distancing provided by the CDC for houses of worship are those endorsed by the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. These guidelines allow for some modification to the recommended norm. Please see:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/faith-based.html>.

- Everyone (except those 2 years of age and younger) attending Mass is strongly encouraged to wear a face covering or mask throughout the celebration of Mass and the other Sacraments, except for the reception of Holy Communion. The face covering or mask should be removed for the reception of Holy Communion.
- Social distancing should be observed between members of different households.
- Members of the same household (such as families) do not need to observe social distancing among themselves and may sit together as normal.
- The faithful are to be instructed to keep some distance in the Communion procession and when returning to their places. An easy way to do this is for communicants to be instructed to keep several pews between themselves and the person in front of them.

#### **NUMBERS OF OCCUPANCY**

In the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, houses of worship may be occupied up to 75% during the green phase. Access entrances, ramps, and seating are to be clearly marked for persons with disabilities.

Pastors, along with their staffs, should plan especially for the pattern of seating in the nave to accommodate the increase in occupancy from 50% to 75% for the green phase respecting the need for reasonable social distancing.

#### **CELEBRATION OF MASS**

The Sacred Liturgy is to be celebrated, as always, according to what is prescribed in the liturgical books as directed to the worship of Almighty God. The options indicated below are to be observed by all throughout the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. The reverent, faith-filled, and natural celebration of the Sacred Liturgy on the part of all should be preserved. Reverence for the Mysteries of Christ and hospitality among the faithful endure, even with our COVID-19 precautions.

- **Liturgical Singing**

Liturgical singing during the green phase should continue to be kept to a minimum during this period. *The Entrance, Responsorial Psalm, Verse Before the Gospel, Holy, Mystery of Faith, Amen, and Communion would represent the minimum of sung parts. Instrumental music may be used for preludes and postludes, for the Offertory, and the Recessional.*

Typically, only a cantor and instrumentalist should be used. Quartets and small choirs, maintaining social distance, are permitted during the green phase.

Hymnals are not to be used. Single use worship aids are permitted, as well as in a digital format. They should be placed at the church entrances for people to take themselves. Greeters/ushers are not to hand out worship aids or bulletins.

Please check the website of the Office for Divine Worship for additional information on liturgical singing and copyright regulations for live streaming the celebration of the Sacred Liturgy.

- **Before Mass**
  - Holy water fonts should remain empty for now.
  - Pews should be empty of all missalettes, hymnals, papers, and envelopes.
  - The faithful are encouraged to bring their own missals, or may make use of personal devices to follow the celebration of Mass.
- **During Mass**
  - Priests, deacons and liturgical ministers are not expected to wear masks or gloves.
  - The sick and the dead, especially as a result of COVID-19, are to be remembered regularly in the Universal Prayer and other occasions of prayer. Those on the front lines, especially medical personnel, are to be remembered regularly as well. Please see the website of the Office for Divine Worship for intentions that may be included in the Universal Prayer.
  - The procession with the Gifts during the Offertory is omitted.
  - Ushers and Greeters are to wear gloves as they handle the collection of monies.
    - Baskets may be placed in monitored and convenient places for people to make their offerings before or after Mass.
    - If a parish wishes to take a collection at the Offertory, only long handled baskets may be used.
  - The Sign of Peace and the distribution of the Precious Blood continue to be suspended.
  - Holding hands during the Lord's Prayer is not to take place.
  - Holy Communion is not to be distributed wearing gloves.
  - Holy Communion is to be distributed during the Communion Rite of each Mass.
  - During the green phase the strong recommendation remains in force that the faithful receive the Body of Christ in the hand. No one is to be denied

Holy Communion on the tongue. Rather, local provisions are to be made for this possibility. Holy Communion is not to be distributed with gloves.

- The Communion procession should be single file.
- **After Mass**
  - Parish bulletins and other materials should not be distributed but be available for people to take themselves.

## **CELEBRATION OF THE OTHER SACRAMENTS AND DEVOTIONS**

- The celebration of all the sacraments and devotions are to take place as usual, but with due regard for reasonable social distancing and the limitation of 75% occupancy of the church.
  - If this has not already taken place, the Sacraments of Christian Initiation for adults and children should be scheduled for the green phase. Please see existing norms, <http://www.odwphiladelphia.org/home-page/news/>.
- Funeral Masses and Funerals outside of Mass are to take place as usual with due regard for reasonable social distancing and the limitation of 75% occupancy of the church.
- Priests are expected to celebrate the Sacraments for those in danger of death, and especially Holy Viaticum.
  - Please see existing norms for the Healing Sacraments, <http://www.odwphiladelphia.org/home-page/news/>.
- Perpetual Exposition/Adoration Chapels may reopen.
- Memorial Masses for those who have died during the Pandemic should be scheduled, if this has not already taken place.
- Deacons and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion may resume visits with Holy Communion to the homebound and medical facilities provided there is mutual agreement between the Communion minister, the facility and those to be visited.
- Permission is to be requested of the Archbishop for any outdoor liturgical celebrations through the Office for Divine Worship.

Please see the website of the Office for Divine Worship for a complete listing of liturgical updates during the COVID-19 Pandemic, information on the ARISE initiative of the Archdiocese, and other resources, <http://www.odwphiladelphia.org/home-page/news/>.

Thank you so very much for your generous assistance throughout the COVID-19 Pandemic. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at [fr.dgill@archphila.org](mailto:fr.dgill@archphila.org).

In Christ, Father Dennis Gill, Director, Office for Divine Worship