



## **APPLICATION OF THE SAFER AT HOME RESTRICTIONS FOR THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA IN CHURCHES AND INSTITUTIONS OF THE ARCHDIOCESE OF PHILADELPHIA**

The City of Philadelphia issued on Monday, November 16, 2020 new *Safer at Home* restrictions that are effective as of this Friday, November 20, 2020 through to January 1, 2021. These restrictions are proposed to help flatten the pandemic curve due to the recent increase in the number of reported COVID 19 cases in the City.

- These restrictions are only for the City of Philadelphia and do not apply to the other four counties of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia—Bucks, Chester, Delaware and Montgomery.
- There is no suspension or interruption of the celebration of public Masses and the other Sacraments anywhere in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia.
- Parishes and chaplains in the City of Philadelphia are to review the restrictions and exercise prudential judgement about any necessary adjustments that need to be made.
- The recently issued Archdiocesan Directives for Advent and Christmas on October 22, 2020, continue to be in force all throughout the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, including parishes in the City of Philadelphia.

The Archdiocese has been in regular consultation with the Secretary of the Department of Health for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the Commissioner of the Philadelphia Department of Health.

One of the publicized *Safer at Home* restrictions requires specific attention. Namely, “Religious institutions are permitted to have people indoors, but density must be capped at 5 people per 1,000 sq. ft. or 5 percent of maximum occupancy.” The Archdiocese consulted with Dr. Thomas Farley, the Commissioner of the Philadelphia Department of Health, about the intent and realistic compliance with this guidance. Religious freedom, our duty to celebrate the Eucharist especially, and our responsibility for public safety were among the chief points of this consultation with the Health Commissioner. As a result, it was understood and determined that in order to fulfill the

capacity guidelines issued by the City, pastors and chaplains in the City of Philadelphia need to continue to adhere to the Archdiocesan directives and restrictions in place to moderate the size and density of the congregation so that it is smaller rather than larger. Those who have been faithfully implementing Archdiocesan directives by limiting capacity, practicing social distancing, sanitizing and mask wearing are already fulfilling the intent of this guideline and must continue to do so. In addition, since many people will voluntarily stay at home during this period, this will further reduce the size of the congregation. The sick and those with compromised health are to be reminded to stay at home. In some instances, at the discretion of the pastor, people may need to alter their choice of Mass time to lessen the numbers at some Masses. At the same time, no one is to be turned away from the Mass and the Sacraments. Accordingly, the established Archdiocesan directives for sanitation, face coverings and masks, as well as, social distancing are to be assiduously observed.

The faithful should continue to be informed of the available ways to follow live stream celebrations of Sunday Mass. All parishes are welcome to make use of the live stream Sunday 11:00 AM Solemn Mass from the Cathedral Basilica found on the website of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia.

Thank you and God bless you,  
Father Dennis Gill  
Director, Office for Divine Worship