



**THE CELEBRATION OF THE SACRED LITURGY  
DURING THE PENNSYLVANIA YELLOW PHASE  
AND THE ARCHDIOCESAN RESTRICTED PHASE**

**OFFICE FOR DIVINE WORSHIP  
ARCHDIOCESE OF PHILADELPHIA  
WEDNESDAY, MAY 27, 2020**

As of June 5, 2020, the five county area of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia will move into the yellow phase of the reopening of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The yellow phase lifts many restrictions previously in place during the red phase, including Governor Wolf's *Stay at Home* order. With the yellow phase, it is now possible to assemble safely in our churches for Mass and the celebration of the Sacraments. The yellow phase still requires precautions to limit the spread of COVID-19 and our corporate responsibility to observe them.

The liturgical directives that follow are for the Pennsylvania yellow phase and our Archdiocesan Restricted Phase for the celebration of the Sacred Liturgy. They go into effect on Saturday morning June 6, 2020 and continue in effect until the Archbishop announces our Archdiocesan Open Phase.

**GENERAL POINTS**

**RESUMPTION OF THE PUBLIC CELEBRATION OF MASS**

The Archbishop gives permission for the resumption of public Mass beginning Saturday morning, June 6, 2020.

- 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. *Although the obligation is dispensed, 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.
- If a pastor, in consultation with his staff, would like to defer the resumption of public Mass to be better prepared for the restricted phase, he may do so for up to one week. He should resume public Mass by no later than Saturday morning June 13, 2020.
- The pastor in consultation with his staff may increase or decrease the number of scheduled Masses for this period depending on local circumstances. *If there is a change in the Mass schedule, the pastor is to ensure that all Mass intentions are satisfied.*
- Wedding Masses also can take place on Sundays during and outside the scheduled Masses.
- Confessions should be scheduled additionally on Sundays, even during Mass if needed.
- It is recommended that the larger church be used for all Masses rather than the daily Mass chapel.
- Live stream services should continue for Mass, other sacramental celebrations and devotions.

## **REQUIRED PRECAUTIONS DURING THE YELLOW PHASE/RESTRICTED PHASE**

### **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>.
- If possible, doors should be kept open before and after Mass.
- Doorknobs and handles should be sanitized after every Mass.
- All sacred vessels, after the prescribed liturgical purifications by the Priest celebrant or deacon during or after Mass, are to be washed routinely with soap and water.
- Fresh water is to be used for each celebration of Baptism and the font cleaned following the celebration.
- Priests, deacons and liturgical ministers are to wash their hands prior to and following the celebration of the Sacred Liturgy.
- Hand sanitizers should be available at the entrances to the church.

## **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 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. 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 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.
- Gatherings of members of the congregation are not to take place before or after Mass for any reason. The same applies to the celebration of the other Sacraments. As people arrive to church, they are to go immediately to their place.
- 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 to ask parishioners to keep several pews between themselves and the person in front of them.
- A pastor, in consultation with his staff, also may consider one-way routes in and out of church.

## **NUMBERS OF OCCUPANCY**

In the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, houses of worship may be occupied up to 50% during the yellow phase. Therefore, the faithful are to be seated in every other or every third pew depending on the layout of the nave and in a way that promotes social distancing. Pews should be marked to indicate this. There is to be some physical distance between members of different households who are seated in the same pew.

- Access entrances, ramps and seating are to be clearly marked for persons with disabilities.

*Pastors, along with their staffs, should meet now to prepare and make plans for the strict observance of these precautions—sanitation, social distancing and occupancy—for the restricted period. Signs should be in place to direct parishioners, especially with regard to observing social distancing at all times. Every effort should be made to communicate these instructions to parishioners before they come for Mass. These directives should be a part of every parish's preparations for the resumption of public Mass. Ushers and greeters will need instruction to maintain the parish's social distancing pattern.*

## **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.

Priests, deacons and liturgical ministers are not expected to wear masks or gloves. Holy Communion is not to be distributed wearing 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.

- **Liturgical Singing**

In general, liturgical singing is 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. The use of choirs is suspended until the Open 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 upon entering the church. 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.
- Pews should be empty of all missalettes, hymnals, papers, and envelopes.
- Single use worship aids may be made available.

- The faithful are encouraged to bring their own missals or may make use of personal devices to follow the celebration of Mass.
  - The faithful should have on their face covering or mask before entering the church.
- **During Mass**
    - 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.
    - **Distribution of Holy Communion:** Holy Communion is to be distributed during each Mass. Out of necessity to avoid a real risk of infection with COVID-19 for the Communion minister and the communicants, Holy Communion is to be distributed in the hand at this time. When possible, a distinct Communion station may be available for those who continue to choose to receive on the tongue. In this case, the Communion minister is to purify/sanitize after each Communion. Tweezers or tongs are not to be used for the distribution of Holy Communion. 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 available for people to take themselves.
      - *If the blessed palm has not already been distributed, it may also be made available during this period.*
    - The faithful may remove their face covering or mask only after they have left the church.

## **CELEBRATION OF THE OTHER SACRAMENTS**

- Baptisms, Confessions, and Marriages are to take place as usual but with due regard for reasonable social distancing and the limitation of 50% occupancy of the church.

- The Sacraments of Christian Initiation for adults and children may take place. 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 50% 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/>.
- Devotions and other prayer opportunities may resume with regard for reasonable social distancing and the limitation of 50% occupancy of the church.
- Communion Services are not to be used as a replacement for the celebration of Mass in any form.

#### **THE PENNSYLVANIA GREEN PHASE AND THE ARCHDIOCESAN OPEN PHASE**

*The Open Phase will be announced by the Archbishop through the Archdiocesan Office for Communications. Uniform announcements about the Open Phase will be provided for parishes and media.*

- The faithful continue to be dispensed from the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days until restored by an announcement from the Archbishop.
- All public celebrations of Mass, all other Sacraments and devotions are restored.
  - *The procession with the Gifts during the Offertory of the Mass continues to be suspended until further notice.*
  - *The use of the Sign of Peace and the distribution of the Precious Blood continues to be suspended until further notice.*
- Perpetual Exposition/Adoration Chapels may reopen.
- If this has not already taken place, the celebration of the Sacraments of Christian Initiation for the Elect is to be scheduled. First Penance, First Holy Communion, and Reception of Baptized Catholics are likewise to be scheduled. These are to be independent celebrations as envisioned by the Church's liturgical norms and should not be combined.
- Memorial Masses for those who have died during the Pandemic are to be scheduled.
- Deacons and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion may resume visits with Holy Communion to the homebound and medical facilities.

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 all 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