



**METROPOLITAN ARCHEPARCHY OF PHILADELPHIA**  
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**No. 280A/2020 O**

**TO: All priests and Deacons of the Philadelphia Archeparchy**

**FROM: Archbishop Borys Gudziak**

**DATE: May 28, 2020**

**RE: UPDATED Guidelines for Opening Parish Churches and Resumption of Public Services on Sundays, Holy Day of Obligation and Weekdays**

1. The church should be cleaned/sanitized before each service when the public may be present, especially those areas and surfaces that are commonly used and touched (bathrooms, railings, doors, backs of pews, etc.);
2. In order to observe social distancing for laity while in church, please consider 1/3 of total church capacity as the maximum number of persons that may be present at any given Divine Liturgy or service (the total seating capacity of the church divided by three). In the state of Pennsylvania, there is no limit to the number of participants at the services as long as norms of social distancing are maintained;
3. Social distancing of 6 feet must be maintained:
  - A. While sitting or standing in the pews— between non-family members
  - B. While standing or moving in the aisles in line for Communion and returning to the pews;
4. Wearing masks is mandatory for laity. Priests are obliged to wear masks while distributing Holy Communion;
5. Please refrain from any personal physical contact among persons;
6. Veneration of icons, crosses, etc. should be done without touching or kissing them. The Holy Water fountains must be emptied. Small bottles with Holy Water may be made available for people to take home;
7. There should be no social gatherings after the services. People should leave the church promptly upon the completion of services;
8. Please remind parishioners that if they are not feeling well that they should stay at home;

9. Please remind parishioners that they are not bound by the Sunday obligation if they are ill, at high risk to contract the virus, or if for health reasons they are afraid to attend the services. Dispensation from Sunday Liturgy obligation remains valid until further notice;

10. When distributing Holy Communion with a golden spoon, please instruct those who choose to receive to open their mouths wide, not touch the spoon, and not cough or sneeze upon it. The spoon must be sanitized immediately after each communicant by wiping it with a cloth soaked in pure alcohol and with a dry cloth afterwards. In the absence of a deacon or servers the tetrapod or other table can be used to place upon it the articles for disinfection.

11. Celebrations of weddings, baptisms and funerals are allowed if all precautions listed above are observed. N.B.: Water is considered to be safe since the virus spreads from person to person via air droplets;

12. While hearing confessions, please wear masks and observe social distancing;

13. Collection baskets are to be left in designated places so that parishioners may leave their offerings without passing around baskets. Once collected, please sanitize envelopes before opening them or leave the basket in a secure place for a few days;

14. Live streaming of Divine Liturgies and other services from your church is still highly recommended;

15. The schedule of parish church services may be changed as deemed necessary;

16. Please keep the church well ventilated by opening windows or by turning on air-conditioning;

17. Please consider other precautionary measures to ensure that our churches are safe and everyone's good health is maintained.

Hopefully, these guidelines will help you to resume liturgical life in our parishes. Please take opportunity to thank our wonderful faithful for their constant dedication to God, service to those in need, and continued material support of our Church and parishes.