



THE ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF PHOENIX

Rising with Christ – Come to the Feast of the Lord **Parish Updates for Mass and Gatherings** **April 15, 2021**

With gratitude to God, this past Holy Week and Easter saw the great blessing of the faithful gathering for the public liturgies in greater numbers. In addition, the release of Bishop Olmsted's Apostolic Exhortation, *Veneremur Cernui, Downward in Adoration Falling*, has provided us with an opportunity to reflect more deeply on the great gift of the Mass and Holy Eucharist.

As Arizona enters the next phase of COVID19 mitigation and given the accessibility of the vaccine for those who wish to receive it, it is appropriate for the Church to take reasonable, safe and sensible steps forward in our approach to Mass and ministry gatherings. For this reason, the following guidelines replace all documents that have been previously communicated by the Diocese of Phoenix related to the pandemic and our commitment to be healthy, smart and holy during these times.

- Physical distancing of at least 6 feet is recommended between unrelated groups or those not in the same household.
- The use of face coverings will continue to be recommended in accordance with the CDC guidelines and advice from the medical community, particularly indoors for those not able to stay at least 6 feet apart from groups that are unrelated or not in the same household.
- Individual pastors may choose to require the use of facial coverings given their local communities circumstances.
- Continue to live stream the Mass for those who are unable to attend in person. Offering Holy Communion after the streamed Mass to those who wish to receive should be considered for your pastoral situation at the parish.

- Those who are sick or vulnerable should remain at home and join in a streamed or televised Mass.
- The sign of peace may be offered through a gesture such as a nod, bow or a simple hand wave.
- Distribution of Holy Communion – Priests and ministers should wear face coverings and sanitize their hands both before and after the distribution of Holy Communion.
- Communion may be received either on the hand or on the tongue at the communicant’s discretion – at a minimum care should be taken by the minister of Holy Communion to sanitize their hands if they determine they have touched a person’s tongue or saliva. Sanitizing after each communion on the tongue may continue at the discretion of the minister. A designated station may be identified for those who wish to receive on the tongue.
- The distribution of the Precious Blood remains suspended during the pandemic time.
- Parishes may continue to reinstate choirs and altar servers but in a manner that mitigates risk of spread of the virus (e.g., physical distancing, use of facial coverings, etc.) when appropriate.
- Holy Water may be returned to large circulating fonts. Water may also be returned to smaller fonts at the doors but should be changed daily. Sanitizing the area around the fonts touched by the faithful should be done on a frequent basis.
- Other Sacraments, such as Confession and Baptism, ought to continue as usual, using prudential judgment regarding mitigation precautions.
- Parishes should have hand sanitizing stations in public areas to assist in good hygiene.
- Other things to consider:
 - the use of missalettes, hymnals and other materials in the pews may be done using prudential judgement.
 - The passing of the collection basket should be avoided – but other means of providing the opportunity to give should be provided such as baskets at the door, collection baskets used by ushers with long handles.
- Gatherings of the faithful may resume with no size limits if the parish mitigates risk of exposure, (i.e., physical distancing, encouragement of facial coverings and hand sanitizing/washing, etc.).

- Every attempt should be made to visit and anoint the sick at home or in the hospital in a manner that is safe for the visitor, the sick person and other members of the household/staff. It is important to respond promptly to these calls, visiting the sick and dying as an act of mercy. We know this can be done in a safe manner that mitigates risk of the spread of the virus.
- Communion visits to the homebound by lay ministers or clergy may resume using prudential judgment and proper mitigation.
- The dispensation from Sunday Mass and Holy Day obligation remains in place. Those who are vulnerable or who care for others with underlying chronic health conditions are encouraged to stay home. In addition, those who are not feeling well are asked to remain at home. Both are encouraged to watch Mass via livestream. The dispensation does not relieve the faithful from their sacred duty to keep holy the sabbath, so all are encouraged to spend time in prayer, thanksgiving, and rest on Sundays.

Thank you for all you are doing to serve the people of God. Your ability to adapt and accommodate during these times has shown the faithful your deep desire to help them encounter the Risen Lord in the Church. As we continue the journey, may our Eucharistic Lord provide us the grace and strength needed to share the Gospel to the ends of the earth.