

Dear Friends,

Yesterday the Directors of both the Office for Divine Worship and the Office for the New Evangelization hosted webinar regarding the reopening of churches for the celebration of Public Mass. The webinar lasted about 90 minutes and was extremely helpful in moving forward with everything.

Here is a summary of the webinar.

1. It is anticipated that Governor Wolf will declare on or around June 5 that the five counties of the archdiocese will be in the Yellow Phase of restrictions imposed by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. This is what Archbishop Pérez used in announcing that churches would be able to offer public Mass beginning the weekend of June 6-7.
2. We are currently in the Red Phase. When we enter the Yellow Phase, the obligation for Catholics within the archdiocese to attend Sunday Mass will continue to be suspended by the archbishop.
3. Guidelines for the opening of churches for the celebration of public Mass come from the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and those established by the Commonwealth for assemblies in public buildings that are in the Yellow Phase.
4. **People who do not feel well or are at a high-risk to get COVID-19 are to stay home. The CDC defines high risk individuals as people who are 65 and older; are immunocompromised due to cancer treatment, smoking, or a bone marrow transplant; have a serious heart condition, diabetes, or liver disease; or undergoing dialysis.**
5. Everyone 2 years of age and older (except for the priest and liturgical ministers in the exercise of their ministry) is to wear a mask while in church.
6. Social distancing in church is a must. Areas where people may be seated are to be designated. Only people who live in the same house may sit together in a pew. Congregating in the church narthex or engaging in small talk in church either before or after Mass is not permitted.
7. Pews are to be free of everything, including Missalettes. Parish bulletins are to be left on a table for people to pick up for themselves; they are not to be handed out.
8. The number of people permitted in church is limited up to 50% of seating capacity. Other dioceses in the country that have already reopened their churches for Masses report that Mass attendance is far below 50% of capacity. Based on this fact, it was recommended that parishes adjust their Mass schedule. **Therefore, when we enter the Yellow Phase, our weekend Mass Schedule will be 4 PM on Saturday and 8 AM and 10:15 AM on Sunday. There will be not be a 5PM Mass on Sunday.**
9. **When we enter the Yellow Phase, public Mass on weekdays will be at 8 AM. There will no longer be a daily Mass at 6:30 AM.** From January 2019 through June 2020, approximately 31% (118 of 378 available) of 6:30 AM Masses had Mass intentions. From January 2020 through June 2020 it was approximately 20% (25 of 126). From April 2020 through June 2020, it was approximately 13% (8 of 62). Several requests were made for weekday Mass intentions, especially for the 6:30 AM Mass, in the parish bulletin during the first few months of 2020 to hardly any avail.
10. Those who receive Holy Communion at home from a priest or Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion must wait until we enter the Green Phase.
11. The use of the church for public devotions (rosary, novenas, etc.) may resume, keeping in mind the norms for social distancing and the wearing of a mask.

A lot of this information, and more, is in this coming weekend's parish bulletin. Thank you and God bless you.

Sincerely,

Father Nasta