



THE ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF PHOENIX

Rising with Christ: Restoring Parish and School Life

Guidelines for Public Gatherings

For use starting on September 8, 2020

Update to permit group gatherings/meetings up to 50 people

The ***Rising with Christ*** plan is a strategy to gradually restore parish life. The first step was to resume public Masses and make it possible for our faithful to receive the great gift of the Eucharist, while also helping people to remain healthy, and, in particular to protect the most vulnerable among us.

The next step in the restoration of parish life is to establish guidelines for resumption of other parish and school activities on a limited basis. We continue to proceed with prudence and caution, balancing the needs of the faithful with our great concern for the physical wellbeing of our parishioners and the wider community. Although we continue to make gradual progress, the COVID-19 pandemic remains a serious public health concern. As such, we must continue to be Healthy, Smart and Holy, and to take seriously the lessons we have learned: practice physical distancing, utilize masks/ facial coverings, continue handwashing and good hygiene, avoid touching the face, and encourage all to stay home if they are vulnerable or not feeling well.

The following guidelines provide information for parishes, schools, and other diocesan locations to utilize in developing their individual plans. It is critical to follow federal, state, and county public health guidelines to reduce the spread of illness amongst parishioners, staff, clergy and the community, so these guidelines may be updated as new information and recommendations become available.

The following precautions should be adhered to by those facilitating and participating in any parish activities:

- Activities are limited to **50 or fewer people** (including all staff, volunteers, and participants). *(This limitation does not apply to Masses, which may allow up to 25% of the seating capacity of the church, subject to physical distancing and other requirements.)*
- All must practice proper physical distancing and stay **at least 6 feet away** from other participants and activity facilitators.
- Activities should take place in a large enough area to permit physical distancing at all times and to promote good ventilation.

- Ensure that ventilation systems operate properly and encourage circulation of outdoor air as much as possible.
- Limit areas where large groups can congregate, and avoid bottleneck areas – lines for check in, gathering around restroom facilities, stairwells, parking areas, and elevators.
- Close shared spaces, if possible; if not, stagger use and disinfect between use.
- All staff, volunteers, and participants should wear a face mask/facial covering while on parish/school property when physical distancing is not possible. Please follow the *Diocese of Phoenix Update for Use of Face Masks/Face Coverings on Parish/School Properties and for Mass* released on June 19, 2020. Parishes and schools must follow any local requirements that have been put in place.
- Implement sanitation protocols, including sanitizing facility on a regular basis. Provide disposable disinfectant wipes, cleaner, or spray so facilitators can wipe down frequently touched surfaces. Wipe down counters, supplies, equipment, or hard surfaces between use.
- Provide access to soap and water for handwashing and/or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, and encourage good hygiene practices before, during and after activities.
 - Do not touch eyes, nose, or mouth.
- Restrict the sharing of equipment or materials, such as books, writing implements, drinks, food, etc.
- Implement symptom screening for facilitators and participants prior to the start of any activity.
 - Screening may include:
 - Questions about symptoms, contact with COVID-19 positive individuals, high risk activities, travel to high risk areas, and other.
 - Providing temperature checks.
- Communicate with participants (and parents, if applicable) the expectations and guidance prior to participation.
 - Stay home if sick.
 - Those at higher risk for severe illness should avoid attending/participating. People at higher risk for severe illness include adults 65 or older and people of any age who have serious underlying medical conditions.
 - Those who do not clear symptom screening will not be able to participate.
- Assign staff/volunteers to help maintain physical distancing and other hygiene expectations.
- Ensure that all participants understand that we are taking these precautions to help reduce the risk of transmission. Despite these efforts, however, during this pandemic there remains a risk of exposure any time there is contact with others, such as when out in public or in group settings. Those who are vulnerable, sick, or concerned about exposure should stay home and limit contact with others. Efforts should be

made to provide opportunities to participate virtually for those who cannot attend or choose not to attend in person.

- Ultimately, everyone is responsible for their own personal choices, including accepting the risks of exposure by participating in parish and school activities. All who choose to participate should openly acknowledge and accept the risks inherent in participation.
- For activities involving minors a parental consent form/waiver is required.

All Catholic school activities are subject to the Return to *School Activities Guidance* issued by the Catholic Schools Office on June 23, 2020, and any subsequent guidance from the Catholic Schools Office. These guidelines are not intended to modify that guidance, but apply only to public gatherings on school property.

Mass and Sacraments guidelines – there are no changes in the current guidelines that allow for Mass and Sacraments using proper physical distancing of at least six feet up to 25% of the Church capacity.

Be Healthy, Be Smart, Be Holy!