

May 15, 2020

Christ is Risen!

We continue to pray during this time of pandemic. We are thankful the first surge of cases has passed the peak for some states, counties, and cities and there has been a reduction of the recommended restrictions by the various states and counties. The governmental restrictions and recommendations continue to change day by day. The risk of infection by the pandemic will continue until a vaccine is produced or until a sufficient numbers of the community are infected and recovered from the virus.

People who are not in good health, have other medical risks, or have serious fear of infection by the virus are relieved of their obligation to attend Sunday Divine Liturgy until further notice. They are encouraged to attend Divine Liturgy by one of the internet live stream or radio liturgies and programs and to support and pray for their church, family, and community during this time of pandemic.

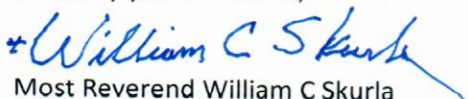
Divine Liturgies in the Byzantine Archeparchy may be celebrated while following current applicable general guidelines. Also the Clergy are instructed to familiarize themselves with the CDC guidelines [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncv/community/organizations/cleaning-disinfection.html](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncv/community/organizations/cleaning-disinfection.html) and the applicable state guidelines, as well as any other local guidelines. Clergy are further directed to the website for Catholic Mutual Group at [www.catholicmutual.org](http://www.catholicmutual.org) for corona virus illness resources.

Before the Divine Liturgy, cover any holy water fonts, remove all hymnal, bulletins, and any reading materials from the pews and vestibule. Wipe the pews with sanitizer after services.

1. Leave any empty pew or two between people attending the Divine Liturgy to permit 6 feet between non-related persons. Families that live together may sit and pray together. Total number varies upon local civil guidelines. Also, the size of the church and number attending determines the total number attending while maintaining the six foot distance.
2. Encourage members to wear masks and use hand sanitizers upon entering the church.
3. Use a box at the entrance to receive donations instead of the normal collection of envelopes.
4. Provide ventilation to safely bring fresh air in and exhaust air out of the church if possible.
5. Priest or Deacon should wear a mask when distributing communion. Instruct the faithful to remove and hold their mask and not to close their mouth on the spoon. If they do, sanitize the spoon before proceeding. Infants or people who are unable to keep their mouths open, should refrain from receiving communion during the time of the virus.
6. Reception of holy bread, kissing of the cross or hands, or kissing of icons should be discontinued during the time of the pandemic.
7. Gathering for coffee after services are cancelled. People can speak outside maintaining social distance.
8. Baptisms, confessions, weddings and funerals may be celebrated with the practices listed.
9. The local parish pastor or administrator is responsible for determining when to restart and the details of the celebration of the sacraments.

If you have questions on how to apply these guidelines, please contact me.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

  
Most Reverend William C Skurla  
Metropolitan Archbishop of Pittsburgh