

Dear all,

Having met with the COVID response team consisting of ASF executive directors and some pastors, the Archbishop would like to promulgate the following liturgical restriction guidance in response to recent health orders per their recommendations. The most recent order is attached, and state requirements begin on p. 7.

1. Limitations of capacity should remain per the **more restrictive** guidance that is listed in the most recent health order. For example, if your county is classified as “turquoise”, church capacity should be restricted to health-recommended 75% rather than the strictly legally allowed 100%.
2. Masks are to continue to be worn by all except celebrants, deacons, lectors, cantors and choir members while performing their respective vocal liturgical functions.
3. Social distancing is to continue to be observed.
4. Per pastor’s judgment, Holy Communion may be restored to its normal place in the Mass. Pastors are to arrange Holy Communion reception so that there is a minimum of “crossing lines” so as to minimize crossing through others’ social distance spaces.
5. Holy Communion may be received on the tongue if:
 - a. A separate station for those so receiving is provided or, if there is only one station, those so receiving receive last; and,
 - b. The distributing minister is fully vaccinated; and,
 - c. The distributing minister sanitizes his/her hands prior to and immediately after distribution.Should the above condition be unable to be observed, distribution of Holy Communion on the tongue should be delayed.
6. Singing is allowed by choirs only, whose members are to all have been fully vaccinated. Social distancing is recommended for choir members, but can be somewhat relaxed where necessary.
7. Deacons and 1-2 servers may be utilized at Mass, maintaining masks and social distancing.
8. Fiestas may be planned and conducted provided they are able to observe the health order capacity/gathering/other restrictions then in place for both indoor and outdoor venues.
9. Dispensation from Sunday Mass is still provided for those whom judge it necessary for health of themselves or others.
10. Pastors retain the authority to utilize more (but not less) restrictive measures should they feel it necessary or prudent.

As you know, the issue of restrictions has been particularly contentious throughout the pandemic. However, charity towards the vulnerable obliges safety over comfort or “the normal”. The state projects a wider relaxation of restrictions when state vaccination percentage reaches approximately 61%, currently projected to be near the end of June. Further updates/relaxation on restriction guidance for the Archdiocese will be provided as needed.

Thank you all for your kind and attentive observance of the above,
Fr. Glenn Jones
Vicar General