



The Orthodox Church in America  
DIOCESE OF PHILADELPHIA AND EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA  
The Most Rev. Mark, Archbishop of Philadelphia

May 15, 2021

*Christ is Risen! Indeed, He is Risen!*

Dear Rev. Frs. And faithful,

Hopefully, we are rejoicing with the announcement from the Center for Disease Control (CDC) of May 13<sup>th</sup>, that those *fully vaccinated no longer need to wear masks or socially distance inside or outside!* The state of Pennsylvania has adopted the CDC's new guidelines as well. Additionally, every adult wishing to be vaccinated has had more than adequate time to do so. (The HIPAA law, safeguards a person's right to privacy and consequently restricts who may ask about a person's vaccination status.) Therefore, effective immediately, we are eliminating the mandatory mask and social distancing requirements for our Pennsylvania parishes and encourage our faithful to return to full participation in the life of the church. Wilmington, DE may implement the new guidelines on May 21<sup>st</sup>. Let our churches be filled once again to the Glory of God! One may personally choose to wear a mask if desired, but it is no longer required. Parishes that have adequate room may set aside a small part of the sanctuary for those who may be immunocompromised, and medically need additional personal space.

I pray that our faithful will welcome these changes and begin to experience some measure of peace. Our full choirs may return to the choir lofts, parish councils may gather and other activities may resume as before. Let us give thanks to the Lord that He has heard the voice of His people and stretched forth His healing hand! I would encourage every parish and parishioner to offer prayers of thanksgiving for answered prayers.

Your unworthy father in Christ,

+ Mark

+ MARK, Archbishop of Philadelphia and the Diocese of Eastern Pennsylvania



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"Thou hast made us for Thyself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it finds its rest in Thee." Augustine