

His Eminence
The Most Reverend
Metropolitan JOSEPH



Archbishop of New York and
Metropolitan of
All North America

ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN ARCHDIOCESE
OF NORTH AMERICA

May 14, 2021

Christ is Risen!

I pray you and your parishes had a blessed Pascha and Bright week.

In light of the announcement by the CDC yesterday saying that people who have been vaccinated no longer need to wear masks and social distance, whether indoors or outdoors, and in light of the reality that most every adult who wants to be vaccinated has had the opportunity to be vaccinated, we are lifting all requirements to wear masks and social distance in our churches in the United States of America. Nevertheless, those who choose to continue wearing masks in the church should not be discouraged IN ANY WAY from doing so. The only thing we ask is that if you have any high risk people in your parishes who are unable to be vaccinated for medical reasons that you make every effort to accommodate them by having a small area of the church, where they can still social distance and wear masks, set aside in order for them to feel safe.

Additionally, in light of the new CDC recommendations, choirs, church schools, coffee hours and social functions, hall rentals, meetings, etc. may also resume as each parish determines it is the appropriate time, but no later than the beginning of the new ecclesiastical year in September. For those parishes needing to move more slowly, we ask that you implement the changes in the sanctuary immediately, and then slowly transition with the other items mentioned above. Of course, our parishes in Canada continue to be restricted by the civil authorities and we pray we will have the same good news for them in the near future.

Wishing you and all the faithful a blessed Paschal season, I remain,

Your Father in the Risen Lord,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Metropolitan Joseph". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a blue line.

+JOSEPH

Archbishop of New York and Metropolitan of all North America

"The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch" (Acts 11: 26)

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