



Resuming Public Celebration of Liturgy in the Diocese of Burlington

Phase II Protocols

Revision 1: August 28, 2020

I. General Guidelines for All Liturgies

A. CAPACITY

Each worship site is to determine in advance the maximum number of attendees that can be present while maintaining *STRICT PHYSICAL DISTANCING PROTOCOL* (minimum 6 feet between individuals). **The maximum number of attendees cannot exceed 50% of the maximum seating capacity of the worship space provided physical distancing can be maintained. If this is not possible, then the parish must determine the maximum number which allows for the necessary physical distancing.**

1. Choir lofts are not to be used for seating.
2. Depending on church layout, this number may have to be less than 50% of the total capacity.
3. If a parish building is unable to support the required 6-foot physical distancing that is required by these protocols, it is to remain closed to public celebrations of the liturgy during this reopening phase.

B. PHYSICAL DISTANCING

At least 6 feet between individuals is to be maintained at all times.

1. Families may sit together.
2. The ministers must also maintain a 6-foot distance at all times in the sanctuary.
3. Seats where the assembly can sit to maintain physical distancing are to be clearly marked. A space of one or two closed pews should be made for every open pew; closed pews should be marked off with tape or rope.
4. In the aisles, 6-foot increments are to be marked with tape.
5. Seats where the ministers are to sit in the sanctuary are to be identified. Additional seats that are not being used in the sanctuary ARE TO BE REMOVED if this can be easily done to reduce the amount of contact surfaces that will require disinfecting.
6. Concelebration is NOT recommended in order to allow sufficient coverage for Masses. If a priest is to concelebrate the Mass, he may sit in the sanctuary ONLY if the sanctuary is large enough to maintain 6 feet from the main celebrant, other concelebrants and ministers in the sanctuary. Otherwise, he is to concelebrate from the nave. At the time of the Eucharistic Prayer, he does not approach the altar, but rather remains at his chair (either in the sanctuary or nave).

7. Ushers/greeters or the priest should greet people with a simple “hello” or a nod but should not carry on a conversation at the door before or after Mass.
8. Areas where people might congregate should be cordoned off. All “crying rooms,” “TV chapels” and small adjacent chapels are to be closed.
9. If musicians are used, **they should be limited to no more than two:** a cantor and accompanist, while maintaining physical distancing. Choirs and ensembles are not to be present. Vigorous singing, especially in close proximity to others, may increase the risk of viral spread. For this reason, communal singing is not to be encouraged (i.e. do not announce hymn names).

C. PROTOCOLS FOR ATTENDING MASS

1. The obligation to attend Sunday Mass is lifted during this phase.
2. Anyone with a cough or fever of any sort and anyone feeling sick is not to come to the church for a visit or to attend liturgy. This directive also applies to priests. Signs are to be posted at each entrance with the following protocols (the Diocese will provide a flyer):
3. Those who are at a higher risk from COVID-19 or those caring for the sick are asked to stay home. As circumstances allow, a visit from the priest, deacon or Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion to bring them the Eucharist may be possible. *See Pastoral Ministry to the Sick and Homebound.*
4. *Non-liturgical and non-devotional gatherings* may resume at this time following the proper physical distancing, hand sanitizing, and mask protocols. **Non-liturgical and non-devotional gatherings are limited to 50% of the maximum capacity of the space with a cap of 75 people (150 outdoors) and may need to be less to ensure the required physical distancing mandated by diocesan and state protocols, regardless of the seating capacity of the space. NOTE: Towns may impose further restrictions on capacity that must be followed within their jurisdiction.**

D. REQUIRED SIGNAGE for all churches (Diocese will provide a flyer.)

The obligation to attend Sunday Mass remains lifted until further notice, especially if you are part of a vulnerable population and/or have an underlying health condition.

Please approach the celebration of Mass with charity and love for our clergy and faith community by following the protocols:

1. *Stay home if you are sick or not feeling well.*
2. *Wear a mask at Mass.*
3. *Sanitize your hands upon entry. Due to shortages of sanitizer, please bring your own if possible.*
4. *Sit in designated pews and respect social distance between others of 6 feet or more unless you are one family unit.*
5. *Refrain from congregating in tight areas or entering cordoned-off areas.*

6. *Follow the protocols to receive Holy Communion as directed at Mass.*
7. *Follow your church protocols regarding registration if necessary due to the capacity limit.*

E. REGISTRATION & OVERFLOW RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to observe the capacity restrictions, churches may need to utilize a sign-up sheet for Masses celebrated on Sunday and throughout the week. If the sign-up is done online, provision must be made to allow those without internet to access the sign-up sheet.

1. Take your capacity required for physical distancing and divide the number in half; half the slots are available to be filled online, and the other half of the slots are put on a paper sign up at the door of the church. You may want to leave a number of available spots off the sign-up list to allow for those who show up, but do not sign up – however, do not advertise that extra seating will be available for those who do not sign up.
2. Limits may need to be established to allow everyone the opportunity to attend Mass within a certain timeframe (i.e. a person can only sign up for one Mass within a 1-or-2-week time period).
3. If it is possible in your space, you may set up overflow seating in another location (i.e. parish hall) with Mass livestreamed to that location to increase capacity, such as may be done for Christmas or Easter. Note: These additional spaces will need to adhere to the 50% or less capacity rule and be disinfected after each liturgy if they are to be used again within 24 hours.
4. If you do use sign-up sheets, have sign-up sheets available for all the Masses in 1-or-2-week increments. You may dispose of all sign-up sheets following Mass.
5. In this phase, outdoor Masses are encouraged at the discretion of the pastor, when this can be done with due reverence and attention to physical distancing.

F. NUMBER OF MASS CELEBRATIONS

All priests of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Burlington are permitted to celebrate the Eucharist twice on weekdays and 3 times on Sundays and holy days of obligation. A “day” consists of 24 continuous hours beginning at midnight (cf. c. 202). Therefore, the Saturday anticipatory Mass does not “count” toward the limit of Masses celebrated on Sunday.

G. MASKS

As an act of charity for fellow parishioners and for the priest, those attending Mass are asked to wear a face mask.

1. Cloth face coverings should not be placed on young children under the age of 2, anyone who has trouble breathing or anyone otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance.
2. Surgical masks or N95 respirators are not recommended.

3. Masks are also to be worn by the priest and other ministers before and after the celebration of the Mass, but not during (with the exception of communion distribution described below).
4. Face masks should be available at each entrance for parishioners to use.

H. HAND SANITIZER

1. Hand sanitizer should be placed at each entrance and in the sanctuary.

I. SANITATION & CIRCULATION

1. All high-contact areas (including contact areas outside and in the vestibule) should be disinfected daily when the church has been used. It is imperative that the solution be a disinfecting agent and not simply a cleaning solution and that directions for use are carefully followed. A small group of volunteers may be secured to assist in cleaning the church between services as long as they maintain physical distance.
2. Surfaces include handrails, doorknobs/handles, restrooms, sacristy counters, the ambo, credence tables, missal stands, microphones (where possible, removing the foam “wind screen” from microphones), elevator buttons, collection baskets/boxes and the side and top edges of used pews.
3. Communion vessels – patens, chalices, ciboria are purified as usual during or after Mass; then they **MUST** be washed with a mild dish soap and hot water **AFTER EACH USE**, even if this requires transporting the vessels to the rectory or another location with hot water.
4. It is recommended to minimize the number of entrances and maximize the number of exit doors where possible.
5. During the celebration of liturgy, windows and doors should remain open when possible to increase air circulation.
6. Holy water fonts are to remain empty and be removed if possible.
7. Hymnals, missalettes and other printed materials are to be removed from the churches. During this phase, *single-use* worship aids may be produced and distributed at the discretion of the pastor. They are to be passed out before Mass (after people have an opportunity to sanitize hands) and must be brought home by each person after use and **NOT** returned to the back of church. Copyright permission **MUST** be secured prior to the creation of worship aids. (Contact the Office of Worship or visit onelicense.com for more information.) Other material may be *passed out after Masses only; ushers must wear masks while doing so.*

J. RESTROOM

Restrooms may be open for use.

1. The restroom must be cleaned and sanitized daily when the church is open.

2. Tape should be placed on the floor outside the restroom to indicate 6-foot distancing.
3. RECOMMENDED: Only one person (except for a parent with a young child) is allowed in the restroom at a time. If the restroom door is not lockable from the inside, a flip sign may be placed on the door with “Open” or “Occupied.”

II. During the Mass

A. PROCESSION

1. The procession route should be modified to maintain a 6-foot distance from the members of the assembly. Likewise, spacing within the procession (between any ministers, concelebrants, and presider) is also to be no less than 6 feet.
2. Only the presider reverences the altar with the kiss.
3. The thurible, cross, and candles may be carried only when the servers sanitize their hands prior to carrying the items.
4. The offertory procession and collection are omitted.
5. The communion procession takes place as described below.

B. PRESIDENTIAL PRAYERS

A stand is to be placed near the chair for the missal for the presidential prayers. Alternatively, the presidential prayers may be read from the altar instead of the chair. Either option avoids the server holding the missal for the priest.

C. MINISTERS

All ministers must observe 6-foot physical distancing at all times. Their seats in the sanctuary or the nave may need to be adjusted from regular practice in order to ensure 6 feet of separation. The ministers that may assist at Mass include:

1. One or two lectors. Lectors are to be seated in the body of the church and wear a mask while in the assembly. They are to take their mask off before coming into the sanctuary.
2. Ushers/greeters. They simply ensure that NO congregating takes place in the back of church or outside (steps, parking lot) and that people are appropriately distanced.
3. Deacons, altar servers, and sacristans. They must abide by hand sanitizing, physical distancing, and mask rules.
 - A. Deacons do not wear a mask during the celebration of liturgy with the exception of when distributing communion.
 - B. Deacons are not to stand or kneel near the priest during the Eucharistic Prayer but be at least 6 feet away from the altar, approaching only to elevate the chalice at the Doxology.

- C. Altar servers and sacristans are to wear a mask before, during, and after Mass.

D. COLLECTION

If a collection is to be taken, baskets are to be placed at each entrance. The faithful will be instructed to place their offering in the basket as they leave. Baskets are NOT to be passed from person to person nor are ushers to approach members of the assembly.

E. ALTAR & GIFTS

During the preparation of the altar and gifts, the priest, deacon, or servers first sanitize their hands, then brings the missal, chalice, paten/ciboria, and cruets of wine and water to the altar and arranges them as necessary. (When a server or deacon does this, the priest remains at his chair. Once the items are set, the server/deacon returns to his or her seat and the priest approaches the altar.)

1. A corporal is placed in the center of the altar, as usual, while a second corporal is placed on one end of the altar.
2. On the paten is the celebrant's host.
3. In separate **covered** ciboria are hosts for the assembly and ministers, which is placed on the second corporal at the end of the altar. This allows the priest to proffer the words of consecration directly over the host he will consume, with the other hosts on the altar, but not directly in front of the priest.
4. The lavabo should be done by the priest alone, without assistance, either at the credence table or at the edge of the altar. The priest (or server/deacon if necessary) then removes the unnecessary items from the altar, returning them to the credence table.

F. SIGN OF PEACE

The invitation to the faithful to exchange a sign of peace should either be omitted **or adapted to instruct that no physical contact is to take place.**

G. DISTRIBUTION OF HOLY COMMUNION

1. The function of Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion may resume during this phase. The number needed for a Mass may need to be adjusted to account for the fact that the chalice is not being distributed to the faithful, and communion procession routes may need to be reworked.
2. A priest celebrating Mass who is in a high-risk group may opt to have an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion distribute communion in his place when no other priest or deacon is available.

3. All ministers (priests, deacons, and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion) are to:
 - a. Wear a mask while distributing communion. (Priests and deacons put on their mask after consuming the host; Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are to be wearing masks the entire time while in church).
 - b. Sanitize their hands in the sanctuary. (The priest and deacon sanitize their hands after they receive communion and put on their masks; Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion come into the sanctuary with their mask on. They remove their mask only to receive communion and, after placing the mask back over their mouth and nose, move to the credence table to sanitize their hands. They then return to the altar to receive the sacred vessels from the priest or deacon.)
4. Communion of the faithful will be under the species of bread alone.
5. Effective the weekend of August 29 -30, 2020, parishioners wishing to receive Holy Communion on the tongue may do so under the following conditions:
 - a. The pastor/administrator must be comfortable with distributing Holy Communion on the tongue at this time. This would apply specifically to priests who have a pre-existent medical condition or other reasons for not being able to safely distribute Communion in this manner.
 - b. The communicants will receive Holy Communion either at the end of the communion procession or after Mass has been completed.
 - c. Priests, deacons or EMHC distributing Holy Communion on the tongue are recommended to sanitize their hands after each communicant has received.
6. Before Mass begins, a small table with a corporal, a small ablution cup (if desired) and bottle of hand sanitizer should be placed at each distribution station.
7. New patterns of approaching the sanctuary for communion may need to be considered to better allow proper distancing.
8. The faithful are invited to bring their own supply of hand sanitizer to use before receiving Holy Communion.
9. At the start of Mass, or at a suitable point during Mass, the priest should explain that those who desire to receive Holy Communion may do so following the protocols below:
 - a. As you come up for communion, please be sure to maintain 6 feet between you and the person in front of you. Markings are in the aisle to help you maintain distance.
 - b. Keep your mask on when in the communion line.
 - c. Do not wear gloves when coming up for communion.
 - d. Take the host in the palm of your hand – then stepping aside, at least 6 feet from the priest, with your other hand, move the mask away from your mouth, consume the host and replace the mask after consuming.
 - e. Those receiving on the tongue are to receive at the end of the communion procession or at after the conclusion of the Mass.

10. If there are concelebrants, they, along with the presider, are to communicate by intinction.
11. The faithful receive Holy Communion without making physical contact with another's hands. If the minister senses that his/her fingers have made contact with a person's hands **or tongue**, he/she should pause, place the ciborium on the corporal and use the hand sanitizer (using the ablution cup beforehand if he/she so chooses). This should be done as often as the minister judges it necessary during the distribution of communion. It is NOT necessary to use hand sanitizer between each communicant receiving in the hand, unless the minister makes actual physical contact.
12. At the conclusion of communion, the priest or deacon purifies the vessels, returning them to the credence table. He then removes his mask and concludes Mass in the ordinary way.

III. Outdoor Communion Distribution (apart from outdoor Masses)

- A. During this phase, to facilitate the reception of communion for those who are unable to enter the church building, the distribution of communion can take place outside in a limited way outlined below at the discretion of the pastor.
- B. Following the celebration of Mass (and distribution of communion as outlined above for those present), a table with a corporal, hand sanitizer and (if desired) an ablution cup, is to be placed at an entrance to the church visible to the parking lot.
- C. The priest or deacon, wearing alb and stole, is to wait at the table for those who wish to receive.
- D. MASKS
Both the priest and communicants are to wear masks. Gloves are not to be worn.
 1. Cloth face coverings should not be placed on young children under the age of 2, anyone who has trouble breathing or anyone otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance.
 2. Surgical masks or N95 respirators are not recommended.
- E. Tape marking appropriate physical distancing should be placed on the sidewalk near the table, and a place to remove masks to consume the host should also be marked.
- F. Occupants from a single car may approach the table at a time. Occupants of other cars are asked to remain in their cars until the minister is free.
- G. The priest or deacon may approach a car with the ciborium if the occupants have mobility issues and are unable to easily approach the table.
- H. The priest or deacon should sanitize his hands before beginning the period of distribution, at the end of the period of distribution and anytime he makes physical contact with a communicant.
- I. To maintain the connection between the celebration of the Mass and the reception of communion, the following is to be observed:

1. Encourage parishioners to watch a livestream Mass immediately prior to coming for communion.
2. Outdoor communion should be distributed immediately AFTER the celebration of Mass, and not at another time during the day.
3. The time window for communion distribution outdoors may not exceed 60 minutes.

IV. OUTDOOR MASSES

Outdoor Masses are encouraged at the discretion of the pastor when this can be done with due reverence and attention to physical distancing. Follow all the same protocols for the Celebration of Mass indoors.