



Resuming Public Celebration of Liturgy in the Diocese of Burlington

Phase III Protocols

April 22, 2021

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 *PHYSICAL DISTANCING PROTOCOL* (*minimum 6 feet between individuals from different households*). **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.
4. **As of April 22, 2021 – Contact Tracing (log) no longer needs to take place. Those attending Mass no longer need to sign in.**

B. PHYSICAL DISTANCING

At least 6 feet between individuals from different households 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. **The number of ministers (especially altar servers) may need to be adjusted to accommodate the additional room needed.**
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. **Ushers/greeters or the priest may greet people before and after Mass but must maintain six feet of separation and wear a mask. Ushers may hand out material (bulletins, missalettes, etc) before and after Mass.**
6. **“Crying rooms,” “TV chapels” and small adjacent chapels may now be opened, but a sign with the capacity that ensures 6 ft. physical separation must be posted at the entrance to those smaller spaces.**

C. MUSICIANS

Churches are now allowed to have NO MORE than 5 singers (vaccinated or not vaccinated) in an ensemble/choir, plus those instrumentalists accompanying the singers. The following protocols must be followed:

1. Musicians MUST be spaced at least 6 feet from each other and from members of the assembly.
2. The space for the musicians must be large enough to accommodate the 6 feet of separation between musicians themselves and between the assembly. The number of musicians may need to be reduced if a given space cannot accommodate 5 physically distanced singers/instrumentalists.
3. There is no cap on the number of instrumentalists used, as long as physical distancing is observed. Wind and Brass instruments are not yet permitted.
4. Masks must be worn by instrumentalists at all times, and by singers when they are not singing.
5. The equipment used (microphones, music stands, etc) must be sanitized after each service.
6. Congregational singing is not forbidden, however, it should not yet be *actively* encouraged by announcing hymn numbers or inviting people to sing. The use of missalettes/hymnals/or worship aids is permitted in this stage.

D. 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.
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 an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion to bring them the Eucharist may be possible.
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.

E. 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 signup sheets.

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.

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

Those attending Mass are asked to wear a face mask at all times while in the church or on parish property.

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. 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 after each use if subsequent use occurs within a 24 hour time frame (this includes when the church is used for daily Mass or exposition of the Blessed Sacrament). 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 may be returned to the pews or placed back in circulation at this time. If hymnals/missalettes are passed out before Mass (and not available in the pews), it is recommended that there be a “dedicated supply” of missalettes for each Mass time such that missalettes are used only once within a 24 hour period.

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.

II. During the Mass

A. PROCESSIONS

1. Spacing within the procession (between any ministers, concelebrants, and presider) is to be no less than 6 feet, except for ministers from the same household (i.e. siblings serving).
2. Only the presider and deacon reverences the altar with the kiss.
3. The offertory procession and collection are omitted.
4. The communion procession takes place as described below.

B. PRESIDENTIAL PRAYERS

1. Servers may now hold the Missal for the priest. Servers must wear a mask.

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 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 arrange 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 servers may hold the cruets of water and wine while the priest or deacon is preparing the chalice as well as wash the priest's hands as usual. Servers may offer the incense, if incense is used.

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.
 - d. It is suggested that regular notice of the communion protocols be placed in the bulletin that covers:
 - i. The need for physical distancing in the communion line.
 - ii. The need to wear masks, and the process for receiving the host (approach, receive, step aside, lower mask, consume...)
 - iii. The request that those who wish to receive on the tongue are welcome to do so, but should wait until the end of the communion line.
6. If there are concelebrants, they are to communicate by intinction.
7. 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.
8. 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)

1. The permission to distribute communion outside of the celebration of Mass (i.e. at the door, in the parking lot after Sunday Mass) is hereby rescinded. Communion outside of Mass is not to take place except when making pastoral visits to the sick and homebound, using the approved ritual.
2. Those pastors who determine that the practice of Holy Communion should continually be regularly distributed after the celebration of Mass is to seek and receive permission from the Bishop BEFORE continuing this process

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.